

FROM SUNDAY TO SUNDAY



Class

Lit

Book 4600 Q

General Theological Seminary Library

CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK

M861

PRESENTED BY

St. Stephen's House
Boston.

FROM SUNDAY TO SUNDAY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

FROM SUNDAY TO SUNDAY

SHORT BIBLE READINGS FOR THE SUNDAYS
OF THE YEAR

BY

H. C. G. MOULE, D.D.

BISHOP OF DURHAM

AUTHOR OF "THOUGHTS FOR EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR"
"COLOSSIAN STUDIES," ETC.



NEW YORK

A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON

3 & 5 WEST 18th STREET, NEAR 5th AVENUE

1904

Lit
4600 Q
M861

68428

YARRELL
NEW YORK

TO THE DEAR MEMORY
OF MY NIECE,
ADELAIDE MARY MOULE,
MISSIONARY, BIBLE-STUDENT,
FRIEND, EXAMPLE,
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED.

SHE DIED NOVEMBER 4, 1901, AT HANG-CHOW,
IN THE HOUSE OF HER FATHER,
BISHOP IN MID CHINA.‡

*What we trust
Unto the dust
Is but the earthly garb she wore;
What we love
Lives on above,
And will live on for evermore.*

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE following simple chapters call for no introduction in detail. Their kind and their purpose will be seen at a glance. I have taken, week by week, some short utterance of the Holy Book ; have done my best to "stand still and listen" to it, as to a voice through the written Word from the Living Word ; and have endeavored to report to my reader what I have heard for myself.

The chapters are intended for reading on the Lord's Day, thus helping to bring together those two great blessings of Heaven, the Sunday and the Bible. In our day not only the world but the Church, too often, is allowing her clasp upon both those gifts to slacken to her own deepest loss. If this book, such as it is, help its readers ever so little, to prize both more, thankful shall I be thus to serve the Church and the Lord.

HANDLEY C. G. MOULE.

Auckland Castle,
December, 1903.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. "ALL THE DAYS."—i	1
II. "ALL THE DAYS."—ii	6
III. THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM.—i	11
IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM.—ii	16
V. SOLITUDE IN COMPANY	21
VI. THE CONSOLATION OF SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP.	26
VII. "THE END OF THE LORD"	31
VIII. "YE ARE OF MORE VALUE"	36
IX. "AGAINST THEE, THEE ONLY"	41
X. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE	47
XI. GRACE SUFFICIENT	53
XII. PEACE AND PAINS	59
XIII. THE CUP AND THE COVENANT	65
XIV. CONTRASTED VIEWS OF SELF	72
XV. THE EMMAUS ROAD.—i	78
XVI. THE EMMAUS ROAD.—ii	84
XVII. THE EMMAUS ROAD.—iii	90
XVIII. THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—i	95
XIX. THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—ii	100
XX. THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—iii	105
XXI. LAKE-SIDE THOUGHTS	110
XXII. "JOINED TO THE LORD, ONE SPIRIT"	116
XXIII. THE HOLY TRINITY	123
XXIV. "WITH CHRIST"	129
XXV. THE SAFETY OF SAMUEL	135

	PAGE
XXVI. AT THE DOOR OF THE ETERNAL TENTS .	141
XXVII. THE WELL OF SYCHAR.—i . . .	147
XXVIII. THE WELL OF SYCHAR.—ii . . .	153
XXIX. A LIMB OF CHRIST.—i . . .	159
XXX. A LIMB OF CHRIST.—ii . . .	165
XXXI. TWO ASPECTS OF BETHANY . . .	171
XXXII. "NO ROOT IN HIMSELF"—i . . .	177
XXXIII. "NO ROOT IN HIMSELF"—ii . . .	183
XXXIV. THE CONVICTION OF SIN . . .	188
XXXV. CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S .	194
XXXVI. STEADFAST AND ABOUNDING . . .	199
XXXVII. PERSONAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY .	205
XXXVIII. ACCEPTED YET CHASTENED . . .	211
XXXIX. OUR ANGELIC FRIENDS . . .	217
XL. REDEMPTION, ENDOWMENT, SERVICE . .	222
XLI. THE WORD HIDDEN IN THE HEART.—i .	228
XLII. THE WORD HIDDEN IN THE HEART.—ii .	234
XLIII. BOLDNESS WITH GOD . . .	240
XLIV. A CHILD OF GOD . . .	246
XLV. MESSAGES FROM THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER. —i. The Generous Master . . .	252
XLVI. MESSAGES FROM THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER. —ii. The Theism of the Lord Jesus . .	259
XLVII. PERSONAL CONFIDENCE AND ITS POWER .	265
XLVIII. CHRIST OUR ALL . . .	271
XLIX. "THIS SAME JESUS IN LIKE MANNER" .	278
L. THE LAST COMMAND . . .	284
LI. THE BIRTHDAY OF THE LORD . . .	290
LII. HIS FACE: THEIR FOREHEADS . . .	296

I

“ALL THE DAYS.”—i

“And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—St Matt. xxviii. 20.

WE could not ask for a better watchword than this at the threshold of a new year. Alike the Promiser and the promise are supreme. The words first fell, syllable by syllable, from the immortal lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, standing “in the power of an endless life” in the midst of His disciples, on that unnamed mountain in Galilee “where Jesus had appointed them.” There He was, the Lord of death, which He had conquered, and of time, of which He took command, to hold it in His victorious grasp and use it all for the fulfilment of His purposes of grace and glory. Coming up from the grave, He now stood in a wonderful sovereignty above time; it

was His absolute right to say what He would be, what He would do, in all its future course.

And then the words so spoken by Him were altogether full of Himself. He uttered no vague and general guarantee, but something as personal as possible. He undertook to be, HIMSELF, the immediate Companion, Fellow-traveller, Fellow-worker with His people, to the very last of their travel and their work. To give His words in their precise order, as the Gospel in its Greek gives them, "I with you am." Person with persons, Heart with hearts, Saviour with followers, Lord with servants, "*I, with you,*" this was the prospect. Aye, and the Promiser, true to His own eternity of being, casts the promise into a form perpetually present: "I with you" (not "will be" but) "AM." It is to be always a *present moment* of faithful fulfilment; up to the date of every new stage of the way, they are to be sure that they have with them "Him that is."

And all this, “even unto the end of the world.” We may render this more exactly, “even until the consummation of the age;” that is to say, in the sense of those words which is amply assured to us by Scripture usage, “Even until I, this same Jesus, in manifested glory, at the close of this great period of redemption, come again.” The thought is not of a collapse of the universe, but of the gathering up of a process into its magnificent result; and that result is to be His Coming. So the presence now is but to be the path to the presence then. The unseen Divine Companion is to be but the Conductor of His saints up to the moment when, upon a sudden, He will dawn upon them as the unveiled Bridegroom, coming again, to take them to Himself.

Infinite treasures of peace, grace and glory thus lie hidden in those few words of the risen Christ. For they promise to His disciples the possession of Himself now, always now, as the avenue to Himself for ever. They tell them that for their

journey they shall have always, beside them, all that He is for them. And at the end of their journey they shall find an open heaven, in the fact of their being, after the manner of the life of glory, “for ever with the Lord.”

But we have not quite reached the last of the re-translations which the Greek of this wonderful verse invites. “Lo, I am with you alway,” says our Authorized Version. And the Revised Version retains the familiar rendering. But in its margin it gives us the literal and most significant equivalent of the original words: “Lo, I am with you *all the days*.”

Yes, this is what the Evangelist records precisely as the Master’s promise; “all the days.” We may even go a little further in exact translation, without straining too far the fine and delicate texture of the Greek grammar: “all the days, *and all day long*.”

Is this a mere phrase, meaning “always,” only expressing the idea at more length?

Nay rather, it expresses it in more depth, more detail, more intensity. It brings the Presence home to the very steps of the pathway, instead of leaving it to float vaguely over its general course.

"All the days"! Who does not know how day differs from day, even in a life of fairly even tenour? Who does not feel the difference of the days' surfaces, and see the varieties of their colours? From the golden sunlight of a day of joy to the blackness of a day of woe, through all gradations the scale runs as we travel on. From the grass of the meadow to the miry clay of the marsh, to the hot dust of the level road, to the flints of the steep ascent, to the waters of the cold river, varies the surface. And the great Companion knows it all. And He breaks up the great promise of the Presence to adjust it to every detail of our need. "I with you am, all the days, and all day long, even unto the end."

II

“ALL THE DAYS.”—ii

“And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—St Matt. xxviii. 20.

COME again with me to that mountain in Galilee “where Jesus had appointed them,” and listen over again to the Promiser in His promise. He is always there, He is always speaking there, in this unalterable assurance, “I with you am.”

Let us ask to-day, as we listen, a question left out of sight in our first meditation. What is the context of the words? How do they link themselves to the utterances just before? For manifestly they are somehow linked; the promise does not hover alone in the air. “*And* lo, I with you am.” That small word “*and*” points us back; it is a cord which pulls at a weight of truth behind it.

The answer is obvious, and as momentous as it is obvious. The Lord had just uttered His great commission. His disciples were to spend themselves upon making Him known to “all the nations,” gathering them into a believing and obedient host, sealed and signed with His baptismal blessing, brought “into the Name” of Triune love and life, into a living union with the God of grace and a living allegiance to His Will. They were to go out into the world to be witnesses to their Master, and willing labourers for Him and His kingdom. So, and with them as such, would He be present, even to the end. “*And lo, I with you am.*”

The first and greatest reference of the promise falls then upon the Lord’s disciples in their missionary capacity. Whether we think of the individual, or of the community, so it is. Behold the messenger of Christ in “the uttermost parts of the earth,” perhaps in complete spiritual isolation, perhaps in bodily peril; in the African interior; amidst

multitudinous masses of humanity in India or China; seeking the wanderers on the plains of North Western America, or even upon the ice of its eastern shores; penetrating the forests of the southern New World; landing on Pacific islands; attempting the iron gates of Arabia or of Thibet. Or behold the organized forces of Christendom on the larger scale, the enterprises of churches, of societies, in their councils at home and in their campaign among "the nations." For every faithful pioneer and pastor, for every organized advance, prayerful and believing, under the great commission of the risen Lord, this supreme promise has its first and special application. Let the missionary clasp it to his heart, above all when either the dangers or the monotony of his task lie heavy upon him. "I with thee am, I with you am, all the days, and all day long, even unto the consummation of the age." Yes, there, close to you, He is. His heart is laid upon your heart, His arm embraces your fatigue, His prescient

eye is fixed upon the consummation of the age, which you cannot see, but which to Him is now and here.

Yet surely the missionary, in the particular and familiar meaning of the word, will not grudge an application of the promise to other disciples than himself and those who, like him, have, “for the sake of the Name, gone forth” (3 John 7, R.V.). Not only by the evangelization of “the regions beyond” is that great commission carried out. “To make disciples of all the nations,” to “teach them to observe all things commanded” by the beloved Master, is a work which is shared in true measure by all who truly live to Him, and who realize that they are all “saved in order to serve.” The faithful pastor and evangelist in the Christian land, bringing into true discipleship the incredulous, the careless, the fallen, the “lapsed,” teaching the nominal follower of Jesus really to “observe all things He has commanded” in a surrendered life, is carrying that commission out. So

is every living and loving helper of the pastor's work. So is every disciple, of every kind and name, who, knowing and adoring the crucified and risen Christ, so lives on and in Him as to receive of His fulness, and to reflect His image, and to commend His blessed Name by that reflection, shining into the darkness of sorrow and sin around. Not only the devoted evangelist in the ends of the earth, but the mother manifesting her Lord in her home, the friend among his friends, found faithful to that Name in the tests of common life, in doing or in bearing—each and all have part in the commissioned work. And so by each and by all, and for all the days, and for all day long, the promise may be claimed, humbly, surely, joyfully; "Lo, I with you am."

III

THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM.—i

“How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth! . . .
Therefore I hate every false way.”

Ps. cxix. 103, 104.

THE hundred and nineteenth Psalm is a singularly interesting study, and from many points of view. It has its considerable literary interest. It is the largest and most elaborate example of a device of Hebrew poetry intended evidently both to give a certain grace of form to the composition and to assist memory, namely, the alphabetical grouping of verses. The Psalm is instantly seen by the reader to be symmetrically divided; it consists of twenty-two octaves of verses. In most English Bibles each octave is headed by the name of a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which

12 THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM

alphabet begins with *Aleph* and ends with *Tau*. A beginner in Hebrew soon discovers that each octave is so written that every verse in it opens with some word whose first letter is the letter which heads the octave.

This is interesting; an antique device of literary skill. Does it seem to us mechanical? Surely it is not more so than our systems of rhymes; a system elaborated even to extreme nicety in some of those hymns, modern and ancient alike, which live and move most vividly with poetic fire and heavenly grace.

Then, further, the long Psalm, on inspection, is alive with human interest.

Its writer half reveals himself to us by passing allusions. We gather that he is young, that he is solitary, that he is despised and persecuted. We see him on fire with love to God, and actually weeping over the rejection of God by man. We see him at private worship, "seven times a day." Above all, we see him with the

THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM 13

holy Book before him. It is "the joy of his heart;" it is "a lamp to his feet;" "O how he loveth the law" of his Lord.

Who was he? Was he David? It is not likely, in view of some of the literary features of the Psalm; though this has been often assumed, notably in that rich treasury of spiritual gold, the commentary on the Psalm by the late Rev. C. Bridges, a saint the light of whose life I saw in my young days, and feel its radiance still. Was it Daniel? To me this has often seemed a probable conjecture. It may well have been he. But God knoweth.

Now, approaching the Psalm for some further study of its contents, we are met by one obvious and impressive element in them. The Psalm is full, from end to end, of the thought of the writer's love for the sacred Book of his Lord, of his assiduous study of it, of his mingled delight in its contents and awful reverence in presence of them. To quote in illustration would be to

14 THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM

transcribe the much larger part of the Psalm. The Book bears many titles, but they all obviously attach to one subject. "The Word," "the Law," "the Statutes," "the Testimonies," "the Judgments," "the Commandments;" we need no commentary to give the terms their reference. The man has before the eyes of his heart the written Oracles of God, as they existed in his day. He was, perhaps unconsciously, himself contributing a new treasure to their store. But his own immediate thought was, that the store before him was unspeakably precious, sacred, sweet, wonderful, a field exceeding broad, a mine pregnant with thousands of gold and silver. To explore it, he was up before the dawn, and he got to his beloved task again before the night quite shut in the day. He found in it the guide of his inexperience, the strength of his heart, when tempted to give way to opposition, oppression, or scorn. The Scriptures were his "songs in the house of his pilgrimage;" his personal friends, the

living and loving "counsellors" to whom he turned, with whom he talked.

If we are right in our guess, the Psalm belongs to the age of the Exile, and so to a time when the old order of sacrificial worship was in long abeyance, to be revived again indeed, but only for a while. It is as if the Holy Spirit had seized the occasion of that valley of humiliation to open the eyes of the saints, as never before, to the immeasurable preciousness of the Written Word, that Word whose very details were to be so sacred at a later day to the Son of Man Himself.

There is a passage, attributed to St Chrysostom, and certainly very ancient, in which it is foretold that in the end there will be great confusions in the Church, but that the Holy Scriptures will then prove to be, as never before, the rock and rallying-point of faith. Truly our confusions are many. May our Bibles become to us all the more what they were to the saint of the long Psalm!

IV
THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG
PSALM.—ii

“How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth! . . .
Therefore I hate every false way.”

Ps. cxix. 103, 104.

WE have watched the writer of the long Psalm as he bends over his beloved Book, and tastes the sweetness of its words, and praises the Giver seven times a day for the gift of it, and rises very early and saves time at night that he may know it better.

Let us steal up to him again, and catch some of the utterances of his soul over his treasure. What, above all other things, gives to this man his love, his passion, for his Bible? Does the long Psalm tell us in any intelligible way? Assuredly it does.

One thing is plain. The Book is dear to

THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM 17

him for no merely antiquarian reasons, nor again as a mere exercise of his mind. Beyond doubt its sacred prestige, from a glorious past, was much to him. And no one can read his recorded thoughts without feeling that the study of the Book, and his converse with it, had told powerfully upon the elevation and firmness of his thinking power. But those things are not before him, though they are in him. The thing which is to an over-mastering degree both before and in him is the thought that in the Bible he hears nothing less than his Lord and God speaking to him, speaking with him, to let his servant know the glory of His holy Will.

If the long Psalm is on one side the glorification of the written Word, it is on the other the glorification of the sacred Will. In octave after octave this strain sounds on. "Blessed are they who walk in the law of the Lord;" "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies;" "Order my footsteps in Thy

18 THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM

Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Here again is an element of the long Psalm, so large, so deeply interwoven with its texture, that if we would illustrate it fully we should need to transcribe phrases from the whole length of the composition.

Yes, the sacred Book lies open here before a student who is supremely conscious that in those pages speaks the Will of God. And to him that will is the very heart of Him whom he has found to be (v. 57) his "Portion." Such has Jehovah become to the man that He is his wealth, his inheritance, his estate, his home, his all. By the Master's grace this has become the servant's experience. In the dialect of the Old Testament he expresses the choice and the joy which another of his race, long after, was to express in the dialect of the New; "I count all things but loss, that I may know Him."

And because that possessed yet ever longed - for "knowledge" was of the

THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM 19

spiritual sort, therefore its direct and profound result was a thirst and hunger after an ever-growing insight, for practical results of obedience, into the Will of God. Man may exercise his reason, aye, in the noblest sense of that great word, upon theistic study, and may reach in that line even sublime results, yet wholly fail to fall in love with the Will of God. But let man get some spiritual glimpse, some intuition, while not reason only but conscience and affection are touched and moved from above, into "the glory of the Blessed God," and then, by a law of the soul, he will love and long for the Will of God.

Thou sweet, beloved will of God,
My anchor-hold, my fortress-hill,
My spirit's silent, fair abode,
In thee I hide me and am still.

So sings Tersteegen. And his deep, sweet song is only the instinctive voice of the being which has "seen the God of Israel," the God and Father of our

20 THE MESSAGE OF THE LONG PSALM

Lord Jesus Christ, as He *is* to be seen when He lifts the veil and shows us something of His fair glory.

So let us follow the saint of the long Psalm, as he beckons us in to read the Bible with him. By the grace of his God and ours the Book shall be to us what it was to him; with that wonderful and undeserved advantage for us, that what he had in part we have in whole—Evangelists and Apostles crowning the work of Prophets and of Psalmists.

“Thou sweet, beloved Will!” And that Will is nothing other than the manifold expression of the eternal Love.

“*Disce cor Dei in verbis Dei;*” “Learn God’s heart in God’s words.” So writes Gregory the Great to his lay friend Theodore, entreating him to read his Bible. We, too, will ponder the Word, that we may know the Heart, and do the Will.

V

SOLITUDE IN COMPANY

“And he went on his way rejoicing.”—Acts viii. 39.

THIS was “the man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure.” He had visited Jerusalem, we remember, as a religious pilgrim, and was now on his way back to the remote region which we know as Abyssinia. Somehow he had become a proselyte to the faith of Israel. To worship the Lord of Israel in His own temple he had got leave of absence from his sovereign, and had found his way, down the Nile, across the Isthmus, up from the Palestinian coast-land, over the hill country, to Mount Moriah. Perhaps it was in Jerusalem that he had bought his copy of Isaiah. However, he possessed the

great prophet's scroll, and was reading it aloud to himself as he drove slowly southward, when Philip came up, and with a tact only the truer because he was filled with the Holy Ghost, got him into conversation about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not by accident, but by the finest touches of the will of God the evangelist came up with the traveller precisely as the traveller was reading Isaiah liii. We need have little anxiety, in the light of that fact, about the prophetic import of that chapter. The finger of God has here written all over it the name of God's dear Son, the Lamb of Golgotha, the bearer of our sins, who sees in our salvation the fruit of the travail of His soul.

However, the two men read, and conversed, and opened their souls to one another driving mile after mile along the solitary road. Then they passed "a certain water," silent and clear amidst the waste. And, lo, the new convert, beholding by faith the truth and glory of his Redeemer,

and taught by his guide about that Redeemer's precept of baptism into the Holy Name, descends into the pool, and comes up a disciple indeed, accepted, dedicated, "joined unto the Lord."

How close, tender, profound, must have been the fellowship of hearts between Philip and the Ethiopian! Is there anything which so immediately and so fully opens the depth of one human being to the depth of another as the intercourse which has resulted in the one proving to the other the instrument of conversion? Everything would concur in the case of the Ethiopian to develop that experience to the uttermost. The mystery and beauty of the coincidence of their meeting, the unmistakable hand of God in the conditions under which they met, their isolation from the world of common intercourse, the glorious newness of it all to the traveller—everything would bring him and Philip together with an indescribable intimacy of thought and affection. Years of friendship would spring, as

it were, instantaneously out of their converse, when that converse had led one of them, by the other's hand, to the cross, to the face, to the heart, of Jesus Christ.

What bliss now to journey on together! The treasurer will, of course, carry the evangelist with him to be his pastor, and the missionary-father of his native Ethiopia. Philip will be more than ever wanted now to develop the Ethiopian's knowledge and belief, to educate him, to encourage him, to equip him for his new life and its influences.

Not so, not at all. "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more." No, never more, till they met in the unseen bliss beyond the veil. No more talk together, nor worship together. As far as we can possibly tell, the new convert went on his vast journey homeward with nothing but his Isaiah and his baptism to help him: bereft of all we understand by Christian surroundings—no Christian public worship, no Christian Communion, no Christian New Testament.

Aye, but he had the supreme secret. He
had found the Lord.

For Philip indeed went, but JESUS stay'd,
And travell'd with His friend.

And Jesus is the fellow-traveller still. In
solitudes of place, in solitudes of feeling, in
the last solitudes of life, time-worn and
bereaved, the blessed "Great Companion"
can work that miracle still, and show us
how to travel to the end, "rejoicing."

VI

THE CONSOLATION OF SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

“Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world.”—1 Pet. v. 9.

WE may re-translate these words, with a very slight paraphrase in one or two details, the better to bring out the meaning of the Greek. “Knowing that the same types of our afflictions are being carried out for your brotherhood which is in the world.”

Here the following points appear. First, “the same afflictions,” as a phrase, gives way to another phrase which lends itself better to the thought that the “sameness” means not identity of detail, but identity of *sort*; a reflection which will spare us many a useless question in our hours of trial, whether precisely similar incidents can be conceived of as coming into another life.

Then the word "accomplished," which might seem to mean "already over," and anyhow might seem only to imply the prospect merely of a termination, gives way to the words "being carried out." And these words put before us the thought of a *process* now going on, and moreover of a process which is tending not to a termination only, but to what is far different—an outcome, a result, an achievement, a something developed and attained as the purposed issue of it all. Here is a contribution real and precious to the full message of the sentence. We are reminded that these "types of our afflictions" are not merely so many dolorous experiences, made just tolerable by the thought that some day they will be over;

For though the day be never so long
At last it ringeth to evensong:

a view of things which may rise no higher than that of the malefactor on his way to the hideous execution of the "wheel" in old France: "*Le jour sera fort, messieurs, mais*

il finira ;” “The day will be trying, but it will close !” No, St Peter has a far different word for us than that. These things “are being carried out,” “directed towards an end,” as the skilled artificer directs all the blows of his hammer, all the wounds of his chisel, towards the shape and structure present from the first to his mind and reached at last by his manipulation. The Lord is superintending, adjusting, directing these “types of our afflictions ;” let that truth be present to the spirit in each hour of suffering, and it will transfigure it. Lastly, our new translation brings to us, in its word “brotherhood,” the delightful thought of the cohesion and solidarity of the family of grace. It is not only “brothers ;” it is a “brotherhood.” Alas ! between brothers, taken as units, there may be contentions which are even “as the bars of a castle” (Prov. xviii. 19). But speak of a brotherhood, and we have before us the thought of brethren bound into heart-unity. The word implies a deep and

sympathetic cohesion. It helps us to the thought of a magnetic intercourse, so to speak, alike in trial and in comfort ;

Our bodies may far off remove,
We still are one in heart.

And now, in what connexion does St Peter place these facts of the spiritual sphere before his readers? His is writing under a great impending shadow of persecution ; a time is at hand when the great enemy will have leave to "sift them as wheat ;" "a fiery trial" (iv. 12) is to try them. And those Christians of Asia Minor in the first century were precisely as human as ourselves. Martyrdom was no easier to bear in the age of the martyrs than it is to-day. Lacerated hearts, not to speak of limbs, were then what they are now. Ruined homes, dislocated affections, not to speak of literal fire and sword, were terrific realities in the old world as truly as in this latest hour of time.

What were they to do? Supremely, they were to remember two secrets, which

were divinely good for them then, and are equally good for us to-day, whether we are called to lay down life in the old style (as in China in 1900), or to yield ourselves to the stress of trial in any other form whatever, stern or subtle. First, they were to "resist, made solid by their faith" (so literally); reliant on the Lord their Rock, and so drawing His Rock-strength into their weakness. And then, they were to remember in the dark hour that somewhere, somehow, a similar type of trial was being victoriously met by some fellow-believer, in that same strength; so met as to be not merely endured but taken as the means to a glorious end, "working out the exceeding weight of glory."

VII

“THE END OF THE LORD”

“Ye have seen the end of the Lord.”—Jas. v. 11.

ST JAMES here, as we remember, refers to Job. He briefly sums up the memorable book which bears that name under two headings, “the patience of Job,” and “the end of the Lord.” Terribly did the patriarch suffer. Not always did he suffer well; some sorrowful words, some even deplorable words, escaped him in his bewilderment of loss and misery, physical and mental. But upon the whole, in a very wonderful way, he had “patience;” he persisted in the conviction that the eternal Judge was on the side of right, not wrong, though the temptations to think the opposite seemed to crowd around his darkened eyes. Then at length the Lord interposed in direct remonstrance with His servant. He brought

him to his knees in complete confession and surrender, by a path which we certainly should not have forecast, the manifestation of His inscrutable wisdom and power in the glories of creation. However, to his knees Job was brought, breathing out words which are now immortal for ever as the voice of the awakened soul; "Mine eye seeth Thee, therefore I abhor myself." Then comes "the end of the Lord." He turns towards His servant in a benign and wonderful reversal of his sorrows, yes, and a more than reversal. He gives him the splendid privilege of being the prevailing intercessor for his misguided friends, and then heaps upon him a rich abundance of temporal mercies, lighted up with the light of the smile and peace of God.

There is a message here which reaches far beyond the particular circumstances. Is not this view of the character of our gracious God, as it comes out in "the end of the Lord," a view to suggest encouragement to troubled faith under innumerable

varieties of trouble? Does it not suggest to us the weight and truth of the often repeated appeals of Scripture, not least in the Psalms, to “wait for the Lord”? “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.” “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” “Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.” “Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

It is the very nature and function of faith, of reliance, to wait. “What a man seeth,” says the great Apostle (Rom. viii. 24), “why doth he yet hope for?” Similarly, what a man seeth, what is before him this moment, why doth he yet trust for? Faith, to take a practical definition, is reliance, *more or less in the dark*, upon the undisclosed action and purpose of a trustworthy person.

It is a confiding expectation of "the end of" that person. And it will be more or less true to its nature, it will be more or less patient and willing to wait, other things being equal, as the person trusting more or less knows, is sure of, is satisfied with, the character and capacity of the person trusted.

In the case of Christian faith, the trusting person is the mortal man who has, by grace, got some sight of the trustworthiness of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in proportion to his insight into the divine character of the Person trusted will be the simplicity, the repose, the inextinguishable hope, of his reliance.

To aid us in this attitude of faith, an attitude distinctively and supremely Christian, let us remember often "the end of the Lord," the way in which His heart, repressing itself for a while, for good and disciplinary purposes, delights in the end to pour itself out in blessing. This is a characteristic of the action of our Lord

and God, this breaking out of the sun after the discipline of cloud.

Let us remember this when our own life, in its personal experiences, has the shadows upon it. Those shadows are not “the end of the Lord.” It is His character not to bring the clouds finally upon the sun, but the sun finally out of the clouds.

Let us remember it when we are sad about the Church. Poor Church Visible! Truly she is not her own saviour. But the Lord has her in His care. And He has not exhausted His resources. Divine revival lies yet in His hand. Let us wait for the “end of the Lord.”

Let us remember it for the weary, rebellious world. It has destroyed itself; it cannot possibly restore itself. But we have not yet seen, even for the world, “the end of the Lord.”

VIII

“YE ARE OF MORE VALUE”

“Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”—St Luke xii. 7.

OUR blessed Lord makes two allusions to the sale of sparrows, allusions singularly beautiful and significant from His lips, letting us understand a little how His sacred thought took in the smallest and the commonest things of earthly life. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?” is His question in Matt. x. 29. “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?” is His question in Luke xii. 7; showing that He condescended to notice how, when “a quantity was taken,” one poor little bird was thrown into the bargain. And then, in connexion with this pathetic cheapness of the tiny animal lives, comes in this assurance on the part of the eternal Son

about the character of the eternal Father; “one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father;” “not one of them is forgotten before God.” Infinitely tender, infinitely humane assurances! Remember them well when the distressing problem, perhaps the distressing sight, of the sufferings of helpless, of affectionate, of beautiful animals is upon your heart. Human maltreatment of animals is as painful a phenomenon of the world as can be named, next under the tremendous phenomenon of the cruelty of man upon man. And “the silence of God” seems, as a rule, to be unbroken over this sad scene. But here, through that silence, comes the Son of God, knowing all things that lie in the infinite heart of the Father, with whom He is one. And He says that no sufferings of the animal world are taken as nothing by the Eternal; “not one is forgotten before God.” The poor tortured dog, the worn-out horse, the maltreated bird—eternal eyes are upon them all. The universe will surely

hear further of it, for the supreme King remembers and takes note. Woe to the will that thinks scorn of the sufferings of the animal, whether the conditions of cruelty be savage or civilized, half bestial, or cloaked with a scientific plea. "Not one of them is forgotten before God."

But our chief concern to-day is not with the animal, but with the man. The Lord Jesus spoke thus of the sparrows that He might with the more emphasis speak of His human followers, and of the thoughts of Himself and His Father about them; their personal work and value in those same divine eyes which took note of the birds and of their death. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Here is a side of truth which is not always prominent in the Bible. The Law, the Prophets, the Master Himself and His Apostles, very often indeed present the exactly opposite side, the abasement of man, the utter and absolute unworthiness of man, the wonder that lies in God's

taking account of him, above all the miracle of the mercy that God exercises in forgiving him, and allowing him to be his Lord's accepted disciple and servant at all. Yes, the message of man's total dependence on the Lord as His creature, and entire unworthiness of the least of His mercies as His sinning creature, is large in the Bible. It is not too much to say that without the fullest recognition of that message and the sincerest sympathy with it we shall find the Bible, the Gospel, the Christ, either insoluble enigmas, taken as they stand, or voices which for us have only a faint attraction.

But then there is, thank God, this other side. There is a point of view from which man, and now particularly believing man, is of mighty “value” in the eyes of his Father and his Saviour. True, he is a creature. But he is the creature made in the Creator's image. True, he is a sinner. But he is capable, in his Saviour, of such a transfiguring restoration that he can be the

temple of the Spirit here, and the exact reflection of the unveiled glory of Christ hereafter.

Yes, man is of "value" before God. He is no mere piece upon a chess-board. He is the precious masterwork of the eternal creating Love, and the dear object of that same Love redeeming. He is, let us dare to say it, sacred to his Lord. He is of "value" to Him, a value indefinitely greater than that of all the lovely tribes whose innocent life flits in the forest and sings beneath the vernal skies.

Then let him respond to the sublime regard of Him who made him, and who has saved him. Let him, let us, look up into those man-loving eyes, and "yield ourselves unto God" with joy.

IX

“AGAINST THEE, THEE ONLY”

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.”—Ps. li. 4.

ACCORDING to the very old tradition preserved in the headings of the Psalms, these words are part of a song of heart-stricken penitence, drawn from David's soul when “Nathan the prophet came unto him” (2 Sam. xii. 1), and said to him, “Thou art the man.” When the awful conviction once made its way into his inner being, it would thus appear that its prompt result was a cry of woe, shame, and repentance addressed direct to God. It was borne in upon him with an ineffable consciousness that, while he had sinned, and sinned tremendously, against Bathsheba, and against Uriah, and also against every soul (from Joab's onward) that could ever be

12 "AGAINST THEE, THEE ONLY"

stumbled by that great crime wrought by God's servant, he had first and in the deepest respect sinned against God. So deeply, so supremely, had he aggrieved Him, that the other aspects of the offence were swallowed up, in a sense, in this; "Against Thee, Thee only."

To be sure, we have no infallible certainty that David did write Psalm li., and then send it "to the Chief Musician" for a setting. An important school of criticism denies totally that he did so; maintaining that at his date, and in his character as it is shown in the Bible histories, he could not have felt and spoken thus. I venture to think very differently from this view, as to the conditions of date and character. But this is not the place for such a discussion. I would only affirm that whether or no David was the author, the Psalm breathes a spirit which, granting that David had any knowledge worth naming of a holy, spiritual God and Lord, would exactly suit his case.

In any case, it is the utterance of an

agonized human being, conscious of wrong. Some have indeed interpreted it as the confession not of a man but of a people, a cry from the heart of collective Israel. But the critic who pronounces thus, so I presume to say, may be versed to any degree in literary science, but cannot be equally learned in the science of the troubled human soul, the individual in his uttermost need. The soul has a cry all its own. And that cry is here.

But now, notice the precise direction of the cry. It refers to some great, definite, shameful sin. Every such sin has many aspects and relations. Nay, what sin has not? Take even the most suppressed and interior transgressions, sins of the silent thought. Do they terminate wholly within, even in regard of our fellow-men? No; the least indulgence in inward evil, let us be sure, impairs the moral state of the being which allows it. And thus it impairs that being for moral power and helpfulness around. No man can “regard iniquity in

his heart " and also be all he should be for his neighbour's good.

Yet, for all this, the Psalmist feels every other aspect and relation of his sin absorbed in this one: "against Thee, Thee only." Its violation of God lays hold upon him, as its inmost and ultimate evil and horror. There is present to him, awfully present, a personal Being on whom his sin has impinged as a blow, whose infinitely sensitive perception has been outraged by its commission. He is there, present in the very soul of His servant. And His servant's soul has struck a hideous discord with His holy mind; not to speak of an act of high treason, punishable with spiritual death, against His holy law. It is "against Him, Him only;" because He is in such immediate, such absolute contact with the being which He has made.

Has our own experience anything in its memories to correspond to this cry of the Psalmist? Have we ever known what it was to be, in the old-fashioned sense,

convinced of sin? If so, we know without a commentary what this sinner, this sinning disciple, meant by his groan, uttered so long ago but sounding still. Our sin had other aspects, no doubt. But the “inmost rudiment” of it was this, that it had aggrieved the holy Author and Sustainer of our being. Just because He was our God, it had *struck* Him as it could strike no other existence. It could strike others only, as it were, through Him.

We stood isolated, in an awful solitude, under that thought. Here am I, the sinner; here is He, the sinless Maker, Master, Judge; for the moment there was no room within us for any other fact than that. And did not that intuition force from the stricken spirit the cry (Luke xviii. 13) which no other, no subordinate sort of repentance can fully generate, “God, be merciful to me the sinner”?

These experiences are not too common in our day. Partly the hurry of life has bred a sad shallowness of self-knowledge. Partly

false inferences from our observation of natural processes, false uses of such words as heredity and evolution, have enfeebled the sense of the awfulness of personality and of its responsibility to an eternal Person, holy and just. But for our very life let us resist that cold downward drift. Let us ask for just such conviction of sin as cannot but cry, "Against Thee, Thee only." For that is the cry of a soul on the one straight road to the Christ of God, the sinner's Peace, and Light, and Life.

X

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE

“God, . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake . . . by the prophets.”—Heb. i. 1.

I PRESUME to take these words quite out of their context. To do so needs an apology, for their context is full of matter of the highest possible importance. Here opens the great Epistle, with its first great theme, the divine majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ; heavenly prelude to all it has to say in sequel about His manhood, His sacrificial sufferings, His high-priesthood, His exaltation on the throne, His covenant, His love.

Yet we may without offence, for this once, take this first sentence of the Epistle to introduce and point some thoughts on another line, which yet, we may hope, will prove a real contribution towards our worshipping faith in Christ. I take it to make

48 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE

it the occasion for a few words about the Bible ; about one side and sort of the Bible's witness to itself as the Book not of man only but of God.

To this end, look first at the Bible not as a Book, but as Books, produced at "sundry times" and in very "divers manners" indeed. Contemplate it for the time in its multiplicity, and from the point of view of its human authorship. Reflect upon the remarkable phenomenon, that it is, in this aspect, as St Jerome said long ago, not a Book but a "Divine Library;" or now, for our purpose, simply a Library, Divine or not. Like most Libraries, it is the result of gradual and protracted collection. The first contributions to it were made, on a moderate computation, a thousand years before the last; old-fashioned people would say, more than fifteen hundred years before. And the contributors all along were people who, from the human side, were curiously different from one another, and independent in many respects of one another. Some

were compilers of histories. Others were poets, instinct with a glow of imagination, versed in the mysteries of their own hearts, and in the sorrows and struggles of other hearts around them. Others were friends of their country, called to the counsels of her kings. Another was an exile, constrained by circumstances to administer the finances of a pagan empire. Some were priests, others were peasants. Some flourished amidst the full sunshine of public prosperity; others lived in days of decline and apparently hopeless fall. Passing on to the latter section of the Volume, to the concluding classes of the Library, we have books contributed, some by a group of countrymen, one by a man of business, two by a physician, many by a trained scholar of genius; books, or rather pamphlets, produced under conditions "sundry" and "divers" to a high degree.

Reflect upon the further and important fact that these curiously miscellaneous works, brought into being in this some-

50 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE

what promiscuous fashion, and collected we scarcely know how, are meantime the literature, or rather part of the literature, not of a race and civilization of the front rank, but of a minor people of Western Asia. Israel has had, as a fact, so vast a part in the world's making, through this Book, that it takes an effort to recollect that side of the matter. The people who, for some thirteen centuries or so, occupied, amidst frequent disturbance, and under frequent vassalage, the seaboard of Southern Syria and its not very extensive *Hinterland*, certainly would not, apart from this Book, have figured in history on any scale approaching to that of India, Greece, Rome, France, Italy, Germany, Britain. They had, no doubt, remarkable characteristics. But they showed little sign, even in their palmy days, of being made for great predominance in the world, either by thought or by action.

Look again, then, at the Book before us. It is the product of "sundry times." It

was brought to being in fragments often quite isolated from each other, and in very "divers manners." And it was part of the literature of a minor and provincial race of Western Asia.

Yet what is it on the other hand? It is, first, not a Library nearly so much as a Book. A mysterious coherence runs all through it. Take once more a reverent, while large, view of the Bible, and say if there is not a *personal character* about it from beginning to end. Test this along the lines of God, of man, of righteousness, of law, of sin, of pardon. Is not the Book, in its essence, one?

Take it in its moral power, its unvarying drift and bias towards all that is for ever right. "The Bible," says a shrewd American, "is such that, dig in it where you will, you find at the bottom of the shaft, Do right." Yet it is the production, from the human side, of a miscellaneous company of Orientals, scattered over ages of time.

Then reflect on the fact that it, this

52 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE

Book of a subordinate eastern race, is now, nevertheless, the Book of the World. It is the holy Book of the foremost nations of European culture. It is also the holy Book of the most simple races touched by missionary enterprise. Of all "sacred Books" it is the only one which proves itself to have a universal mission.

Is there no mystery of heaven behind all this? Does not the Book bear witness to itself? Produced as, from the human side, it was, it can only be what it is because, through it, "God spake."

XI

GRACE SUFFICIENT

“My grace is sufficient for thee.”—2 Cor. xii. 9.

THIS is a word spoken by the Lord Jesus, in and from His glory, to a disciple still wrestling along the path of the pilgrimage. As such it is one of a precious series preserved to us in the New Testament. We have words so spoken by that Speaker to Saul at his conversion (Acts ix. 4–6), to Ananias at Damascus (ix. 10–16), and to Paul again at Corinth (xviii. 17, 10), in the Temple (xxii. 18–21), and in the Roman citadel at Jerusalem (xxiii. 11). But of them all surely none is more precious, more pregnant of “comfort and good hope through grace,” more full of the unutterable heart of Jesus, than this.

It comes to us as part of a narrative of personal spiritual experience. We should

know nothing of it had not St Paul opened up this holy secret of his soul, and told the Corinthians, and told us through them, of that crisis (fourteen years ago when he wrote) of awful need and of wonderful deliverance. Let us not take up this treasure lightly. It is a sacred thing, not only in itself, but because of our getting it through this personal disclosure and confession. It was with a great effort, probably, that the Apostle told the Corinthian converts about the "thorn in the flesh," "the angel of Satan," and of his three imploring appeals to the Lord to be set free from the intolerable trial. Deep souls (and St Paul's was one) do not lightly open up their secrets. The more let us reverence and prize the gift when, as here, for our sakes and for the Lord's glory, the effort is made, the sacrifice of individual feeling is offered up.

Not one word need I say here on the question, what was "the thorn." A whole literature has been written on it. But for us just now it matters not what it was.

Enough that it was, to a very strong man, a very tremendous trial; a something which for the time darkened his whole spiritual sky; a conflict which brought him face to face with the powers of hell.

He cried out for release. "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart." He records the repeated entreaty without any regret, with no trace of a feeling that he ought to have endured in silence. "*Lerne zu leiden ohne klagen*," "Learn to suffer without crying out," is a noble precept—as regards "cries" to man, which are often better forborne. But the maxim has no bearing upon cries to God, to the Christ of God. Too ready, too outspoken, too confiding, we cannot be in "telling Jesus all." Such "crying out" will not weaken us; it will only strengthen us. For it is the outgoing of our soul not only to infinite kindness, but at the same moment to infinite wisdom and strength. It is taking refuge in the Rock. It is "coming to the Living Stone." And that (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5)

is the way to become "living stones" ourselves, by contact, by contagion.

So he "besought the Lord thrice." He was answered. There was a divine attention and response. The Lord, once Himself driven to "strong crying and tears," Himself once a suppliant in a yet darker hour, asking, in the profound simplicity of pure human agony, for the "passing" of the "cup" of unknown sorrows, quite understood His servant. It must have been a help to the servant, heart-broken with the struggle, to reflect that he appealed to One who once said Himself (Ps. lxxix. 20), "Reproach hath broken my heart." St Paul could be sure then, as we may be sure now, of that Friend's supreme "acquaintance with grief." Yet the answer was not, in form, an affirmative, a consent. The thorn was not willed away; the "evil angel" was not driven back into the deep. As in Gethsemane, so with the Apostle in his dark hour, there came not a consent to the request in detail, but the meeting of it

with a transcendently higher blessing. "Thorn," and "angel of Satan," might, or might not, be ultimately withdrawn. But then and there in all His fulness, in His all-sufficient present Self (for "grace" is just the Lord of all love and power Himself, in action for us), Jesus Christ was given to His saint. In the power of that gift the saint found on a sudden that the dread adversity had changed its character and its position. It was not upon his head, overwhelming. It was beneath his feet, overcome. Nay, it was even better than overcome. It had been transformed into "an occasion," not "of falling," but of "mounting up with wings." "I take pleasure in distresses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

"As then, so now." That ear is not heavy to-day, nor that arm shortened, nor that grace less sufficient. Nor is the assurance of its sufficiency couched less distinctly now than then *in the present tense*. The story has often been told (it is authentic;

it is the experience of a great servant of God now living) of the agonized suppliant who, as he cried with tears, "Let Thy grace be sufficient for me," lifted his wet eyes and saw upon the wall, lately hung there, the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The "is" was painted bright and conspicuous, and it caught his eye and filled his heart; and he rose up, there and then, to a new life of peace and power. Yes, it is true to-day. It is an everlasting present tense. "It is sufficient," and "for thee."

XII

PEACE AND PAINS

“On Thee we rest.”—2 Chron. xiv. 11.

“Giving all diligence.”—2 Pet. i. 5.

LET us think awhile of two opposite aspects of the Christian life ; contrasted, not discordant ; two sides of one shield. Take first the aspect of rest, of faith, of the peace of an absolutely simple reliance. Take then the aspect of diligence, of pains, of watching and prayer, of the faithful use of appointed means.

(1) “On Thee we rest.” This is the central secret of the Christian. It is the distinctive and characteristic thing in the Gospel. “I believe,” not “I will do,” is the watchword the Gospel gives us. “I rely, I confide, I trust, I entrust ;” this is the very life of our religion, if it is the religion of the New Testament, the water

from the fountain-head of the truth of Christ.

“By faith, and faith only, we are justified.” This was the grand confession of the Reformation. It is to the full as true to-day. It means that we sinners, knowing something of the awfulness of sin, and of sin as guilt, go for the whole of our reason for “peace with God” to the Lamb that was slain, to Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, and is now our Advocate with the Father, being the Propitiation for our sins. It means that we go to Him “just as we are, and waiting not to rid the soul from one dark blot,” as if we could so make ourselves worthier of Him. We came with empty hands to receive the gift of God. It is a profound (while salutary) humiliation. It “pours contempt on all our pride.” But oh, how great a rest it is! It is Christ Himself for us.

“Purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts xv. 9). Here is another living motto full of the soul’s deep rest. For the conquest

of evil within us, for emancipation from its tyranny as it lies around us, here, according to the Gospel, is the heart, the centre of our secret. "Through God we shall do valiantly; it is He that shall tread down our enemies" (Ps. lx. 12). Yes, it must be even so. If evil is to be overcome indeed, not merely repressed but overcome, at and from the depths, there is only one adequate way. Expressed from one side it is—Jesus Christ, brought by the Holy Ghost to the very throne of the heart. Expressed from the other side it is—faith. That is to say, the true secret is a trusted Christ.

This fact of the spiritual life may be, of course, like every other, mis-stated, and misapplied. It may be put so that it seems to mean an absolute "quietism," in which the soul merely sits still and lets things be. It may be applied so as to seem to suggest a result in which the disciple shall come to claim an unsiuning "perfection," getting beyond humiliation and the confession of sin. But the thing in itself standeth sure.

The one true victory over inward sin is a trusted Christ, in all the Divine simplicity of those words. Tempted man, defeated a thousand times after all your efforts, make this sacred experiment for yet one crisis more. Call in the Lord, the Stronger than the strong. Give yourself over to Him. He will hold you, and tread down the enemy. So you, held up by Christ, shall in Christ tread him down ; resting, yet victorious.

And is not our secret the same for sorrow, and at last for death ? The trusted Christ is the one perfect Anodyne for a broken heart. And He is the one Friend who can cross with us the last river, and say, as we are passing, "Thou shalt not see death ; thou shalt not taste death ; thou shalt never die ; thou who believest in Me. Rest, and in that rest go over."

(2) "Giving all diligence." Behold the other side of the shield. The rest of faith is anything but a way to contrive for us a safe "slackness" in the Christian course. Rather, the promise of it is the greatest

possible stimulus to diligence. For it is an assurance that real diligence, applied at the right point, is immensely worth the while.

What is the highest and at the same time the simplest purpose of the means of grace—secret prayer, self-scrutiny before God, the Holy Scriptures, the sacred Supper of the Lord, the Christian Sabbath, public worship, family devotion? Mainly, a two-fold purpose, two aims converging into one; a growing knowledge of our need, and a deepening and ever-developing sight of our Lord Jesus Christ as “all our salvation and all our desire,” so that we both love His will and rely upon His power. If we neglect “all diligence” in the spiritual life, then, let us be sure of it, we shall decline in the deep desire to be conformed to His image and to follow His steps. Further, we shall decline in the conscious activity and persistence of the faith which rests in Him for peace and for power.

So for the sake of the “rest of faith,”

let us "give all diligence." Only let us be "diligent" all the while in the recollection that the life of our life, the soul of our secret, deep in the centre, lying within, and above, and distinct from, all the means, is, to the last, a trusted Christ.

XIII

THE CUP AND THE COVENANT

“This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.”—St Luke xxii. 20.

ONE change in the translation is called for here. We will read the word “covenant” in the place of “testament;” “this cup is the new *covenant* in the blood” of the Lord. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Greek term is best rendered thus. The evidence lies not only in the term’s ordinary usage, but also in the fact that our Master was here certainly making reference to the prophetic Scriptures, above all to the great passage of Jeremiah (xxxi. 31), where we have a “new covenant” announced. It is quite certain that the Hebrew word there (*b’rith*) is to be translated “covenant,” not “testament.” So the same word is

66 THE CUP AND THE COVENANT

appropriate in this sacred reference to the prophetic passage.

True, the word "testament," or "last will," would convey to us here thoughts full of beauty and power. It has been finely said that our Lord, in dying, bequeathed to us all His wealth, and then rose again to be His own Executor. And the story is told of a Scottish peasant-girl, stopped by Claverhouse's troopers on her way to the secret worship-place in "the moorlands of mist," and questioned where she was going. "Sir," she said, "my brother has died, and I am going to hear his will read, and to get my share."

It was an answer as full of true theology as it was full of wit too quick for the questioner, who let her go. The promises of Christ *are* a bequest, ordered, irrevocable, sure; the Will of the Elder Brother, in which "the whole family in heaven and earth" have share. So in deepest truth the Gospel is a Testament. Still, as I have said, the word "covenant" is here the

more accurate representation of our Elder Brother's utterance when He founded the covenanting Feast.

Taking the sentence so, let us look at some factors in it, the better to grasp and to use it.

(i.) What is that "New Covenant" of which He spoke when He gave to them "the cup, after supper"? We find the answer primarily in Jeremiah xxxi. We find it twice again in the Hebrews, in the eighth chapter and in the tenth. And in 2 Cor. iii. we have another passage, full of light on the matter, where St Paul speaks of the Gospel ministry as dealing with a "New Covenant," not of "letter" but of "Spirit;" that is to say, concerned not with the written tablets of Sinai, which condemn, but with the gift of Pentecost, which brings life.

Looking over these Scriptures, we read the undertakings of the New Covenant. They are two; each wonderful, each divine, and forming in their harmony the very "secret of the Lord." First, there is a

68 THE CUP AND THE COVENANT

grand *amnesty* for the guilty soul which accepts the covenant; "their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." So it is undertaken, out of the sovereign mercy of the covenanting God. The subjects of the Covenant, infinitely unworthy, chargeable with rebellion, with countless wanderings from their Lord "every one to his own way," shall be welcomed back as if all this had never happened. It is an "amnesty," indeed, an "act of oblivion," full and sincere as the heart of God.

Then, in living connexion with this, comes in the grand second term: "I will put My laws in their hearts, and in their minds I will write them." In Jeremiah and in Hebrews this term is mentioned first in the Covenant. But on reflection we find that, in the order of the thought, it comes in second. For it *rests upon* the other: "I will write My laws in their minds; . . . for I will remember their sins no more." Even so; such is the divine way of peace. The forgiveness, absolute and

(as to any cost of ours) unbought, precedes. Then, not till then, but then, comes the inward work wrought on the forgiven. The same Agent acts in both. The Giver of the amnesty is the Worker of the purity. And the same way to get each grant of heaven is prescribed to the subjects of the Covenant. Alike their pardon and their purity are to be *received* from Him. Their pardon of course; but their purity also. Let them bring "heart" and "mind," "just as they are," to His Spirit's operation. Then He, not they, will take the pen, and write: "*I will put* My laws in their hearts; *I will write* them in their mind.

Christian, remember the New Covenant—and use it. Welcome the legal force and tenacity of the very word Covenant. The Lord of mercy and life binds Himself with it, in the bond of His fidelity to Himself. Cast yourself at His feet—and then and there claim, in humble boldness, the peace and also the inward hallowing which He stands *covenanted* to give.

(ii.) This Covenant, says the Master of our souls, is "in My blood." Yes, it is as free to us as the summer air. But, that it might be so to us, it cost Him "His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion;" the *Lama Sabachthani*; all that was meant in the death of the Lamb of Golgotha. It is as sure as that unspeakably sacred preliminary can make it. No partial or precarious blessings are intended to be ours, when the Contract bears *that* Seal. And oh, what reverence, what consciousness of an inexhaustible obligation, what a bond (which yet is perfect freedom), will be upon the soul which takes, and uses, *all* the blessings of the New Covenant, when it contemplates that Seal upon that Deed!

(iii.) "This Cup is the New Covenant." Here is a message, straight from the heart of Jesus Christ, for our Communion hour. Take that Cup, O disciple; drink that Wine. As you drink it, recollect the Covenant. As you recollect, look again in the great Covenanters' face, by faith. As you look,

and as you use His royal Ordinance, say to yourself, "As sure as this chalice is no dream at my lips, so sure His amnesty over me, and His sin-annulling power within me, are for my very soul no dream, but fact."

XIV

CONTRASTED VIEWS OF SELF

“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.”—Job xxvii. 6.

“Mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself.”—Job xlii. 5, 6.

THESE two assertions come from one mouth, from one heart. They are pronouncements by the same speaker upon the same subject, himself. The contrast of the two is diametrical and absolute.

The wonder of this is to be explained not at all by the character of the speaker, as if he were a hasty, fitful, unstable person, who did not know his own mind from one hour to another, and were ready on slight inducements to unsay his sayings. The explanation lies in the great difference of the light which fell upon the subject-matter at two different times; the light in which, at first and then at last, Job saw himself.

(i.) The first assertion was made when Job had only human light to read his heart by. We remember the position ; and certainly we shall be slow to judge Job severely as we do so. Nay, we shall be wise not to judge him at all, remembering, as some one has well said, that we, so ready to criticize our brethren, are not only not seated on the judicial bench, but not even summoned to the jury-box. We remember with sympathy and reverence, in Job's case, how terrific were his trials, how utterly inexplicable (except behind the veil which hid from him the action alike of God and of Satan) were his accumulated sufferings, and how exquisitely trying to his lacerated spirit was the line taken by his friends. Still, not as judges but as reverent observers, we have before us the fact that he took up an attitude of energetic self-vindication, a tone of indignant self-assertion. In the light merely of man upon man he saw himself as a being pure of purpose, true of heart, just and kind. The baseless insinuations of his friends, who

assumed that he had done some foul concealed sin, spurred him by reaction into the extremest language of self-satisfaction. He was righteous; he was good; he had nothing to confess; his heart should "not reproach him as long as he lived."

There was a sense in which he was right. His friends did grossly mistake him. In respect of their opinion, he had reason in saying he was virtuous. Only in so doing he ran the tremendous risk of forgetting that there was another point of view, another kind of light; the light of a human standard was too dim to tell him *all* about himself.

(ii.) Then at last, as the wonderful story works itself out, another light is let in upon him. Not Zophar, or Eliphaz, or even Elihu, but JEHOVAH speaks to Job. Very remarkable is the way in which the book represents His action on His servant's conscience. He speaks very little, if at all, about Job's moral imperfection. He simply reveals to Job His own divine glory as the

omnipotent Creator: Maker and Master of Creation, Cause of all existence in the world. He draws His disciple's eyes upward from self to attempt to gaze on Him in the inscrutable yet radiant majesty of His sovereign will. Then Job breaks down; he belies his misguided estimate of his own goodness, and "abhors himself."

We must not, indeed, think that Job was convinced of sin by the mere, solitary, isolated realization of the omnipotence of God. No; he knew God already, in a deep experience, so we gather, as just and holy. The convicting power lay in this, if we read the case aright; that the great Revealer so showed His absolute Creatorship to Job as to cast a new and awful consciousness upon him that God's justice and holiness were absolute and infinite, as the moral attributes of a Being absolute and infinite in the mysterious power to cause and to maintain the world.

However, it was the light of the Lord which showed Job himself, and brought

him to his knees, and drew that word of self-aborrence from his mouth, and then "stopped" that mouth in penitent silence at last.

Never did human hearts more need than now that illumination, that searchlight, upon themselves. At our day, conviction of sin is woefully uncommon. "What must I do to be saved?" is a question heard now, by man and by God, far, far more rarely than, let us say, sixty, or fifty, or forty years ago. Yet it is a question which concerns the very life of true religion. For "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" is calculated for convinced sinners, not for self-complacent virtuous men. The doctrine of the Cross is still "folly," except to the broken, contrite heart. Let such hearts cease to be, and the Gospel will sound in vain; or rather it will be silent as air-waves are silent when there are no ears to know the waves as sound.

Where is the remedy? It lies in our being reawakened to a soul-sight of God,

the infinitely Holy One. It is the promised work of the Spirit to reveal Him. Then "come, Holy Spirit, come;" show us God in Christ, as Fire, as Light. Then we shall see ourselves in our tremendous need. And then Thou canst show us indeed that same God, in Christ, as Life, as Love.

XV

THE EMMAUS ROAD.—i

“Behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus.”—St Luke xxiv. 13.

LET us join these two men on their walk. Perhaps we have done so often before. For surely there are few true Bible-readers who do not love that perfect narrative, Luke xxiv. 13–35, and have not often tried to realize the scene in some degree, feeling themselves there, thinking, talking, looking, listening, as if in companionship with Cleopas and his friend.

It is a scene inexhaustibly rich in help and comfort to the Christian. It carries with it, as great literary critics have pointed out, the deepest inward evidences of its own literal truthfulness. For it so narrates the intercourse of “a risen God” with commonplace men as to set natural and

supernatural side by side *in perfect harmony*. And to do this has always been the difficulty, the despair, of imagination. The alternative has been put reasonably thus: St Luke was either a greater poet, a more creative genius, than Shakespeare, or—he did not create but record. He had an advantage over Shakespeare. The ghost in Hamlet was an effort of laborious imagination. The risen Christ on the road was a fact supreme, and the Evangelist did but tell it as it was. And in that fact lies hid, safe and living, full of the power of an endless life and a blessed hope, the very salvation of our souls.

Well, if the narrative of that walk and talk is such, we need not fear weariness and monotony if we join once more the two pedestrians, however we may have done so before. This Sunday we will do so, and again, and yet again. Emmaus will yield us fruit each time.

To-day, then, take the story from a side which is not often, I think, remembered by

the reader. On what day of the week, and at what season of the year, did the incident happen? On the first day of the week, and at Passover-time. What do these notes tell us about the conditions and surroundings of that out-door conversation, so deep in its topics, so wonderful and blissful in its results? They tell us that the surroundings were anything but sacred and retired. That road must have been a frequented one, not improbably a crowded one. Passengers were everywhere upon it, coming and going, passing and crossing. It was a scene full of the stir of publicity and the common day.

Most, if not all pictures, ancient and modern alike, which gave us the Emmaus Road, present to us a sort of Sabbatic scene. The two, the three, are seen pacing a lonely track over fields which look the very picture of repose. It is Sunday afternoon, in a hallowed region and in a devout age. All conduces to heavenly thoughts, exchanged in tranquil privacy, while the sun sets slowly upon the holy day.

But it was not actually so at all. To the Jew, let us remember, then as now, the first day of the week was the first week-day. As the Saturday was his Sabbath, the Sunday was as it were his Monday. With it, the stir of common life began again in force, and men went about their common ways of toil or pleasure. Nor only so. This "first week-day" was also one of the days of the Passover season at Jerusalem. And that season in that place meant a vast aggregation of pilgrims from all distances, the thronging of the neighbourhood of the city with literally many hundreds of thousands of men and women besides the normal population. If we can combine in thought the crowds and stir of a modern English Bank-holiday with the conditions of an Oriental festival, religious in its essence, but assuredly also partaking in some measure of the nature of a fair-time, we place before our minds not inaccurately the state of things over the fields and roads of Judea on that particular day.

So the sacred Walk proves to have been a walk in public, in a crowd. It must have been carried on under difficulties, with many an interruption, as groups or individuals pushed past, or came in the way, while the three companions held onward.

Is there no message in this to us? Yes, there is indeed. He who found Magdalene alone (save for angels) in Joseph's garden, and spoke to her heart there in the sweet solitude, spoke with equal ease and power to Cleopas and that other troubled heart upon the open and often noisy road. He is the same to-day. Literally, perhaps, amidst the throng and the turmoil of the modern street, He is able to talk to his followers' hearts. "I have often found my Saviour present with me on the foot-plate of the engine," said a Christian man a few years ago, a driver on the Metropolitan line. Yes, the most public, the most *blatant* surroundings can make room for the companionship of Jesus. And when we are not upon the literal highway, yet all too

conscious in some other sort of the thronging noises of our modern life of publicity and haste, still let us remember Emmaus. Let us take it not as an idyllic picture, in contrast to our present lot, but far rather as a reminder that in our lot, just as it is, the Lord can meet us, and can talk with us, till our hearts also know what it is to burn with Him.

XVI

THE EMMAUS ROAD.—ii

“Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.”—St Luke xxiv. 15.

LAST Sunday we surveyed the probable scene on the Emmaus Road, as Cleopas and his friend set out upon it that never-to-be-forgotten day. We found it a busy scene, a highway alive with pedestrians coming and going, on a day which resembled our Monday more than our Sunday, and which bore some of the characteristics of a holiday as well.

This reminded us, by way of a lasting and general message, of the willingness and the power of our Lord Jesus to make His presence felt not only in secret places, or in sacred places, but “out in the open” of life, “before the sons of men” (Ps. xxxi. 19).

Let us revisit that scene to-day. In thought let us steal up to that group of three, as they make their way along the road. Let us come near enough not only to look but to listen. Let us, above all, listen to Him who has just joined the two, and has somehow drawn them into a conversation, till by degrees He has raised it into a monologue, while they listen with eager ears and burning hearts.

Observe first that He is the kind *aggressor*. They do not accost Him, but He them. And His first words, if we interpret the Evangelist aright, were not quite welcome to them. The Revised Version, taking a "reading" of the Greek which seems to be the best attested, renders the close of verse 17 thus: "And they *stood still, looking sad.*" Nay, we may even, with good support, translate the last word of the Greek not only by our word "sad" but almost by "sullen." It was the sadness of men too unhappy *to like* to be disturbed, particularly by one who spoke cheerfully. And can we

doubt that a sacred, radiant *cheerfulness* was on the Lord's face and in His voice that day?

Well, they met Him at best with small encouragement. But in a few moments He has got them to unbend their attitude of reserve. A kindly question unlocks the pent-up trouble. And point by point, burthen by burthen, doubts, and fears, and disappointments, and hopeless regrets, they have told Him all. He has let them speak on and on. Totally ignorant of His identity they are yet somehow put at ease by His bearing, His voice, His manifest goodness. Conceivably they might have feared He was an enemy in disguise, seeking to entrap the followers of the crucified Prophet to their own ruin. But that, they felt, was impossible. They trusted Him, and they told Him all.

Then, when they had quite done, He speaks. Their whole case is before Him. He can touch their wounds now with the fine precision of perfect sight as well as

perfect skill. He can speak to men who *know* that He now knows.

“O fools and slow of heart!” Was it a harsh beginning? In our English it is; but not in St Luke’s Greek. The *tone* of the Greek may be well represented by, “Dear slow-witted people!” or the like. And I dare to think it likely that the blessed Speaker not only spoke kindly, but smiled, nay, almost, may I say it? laughed a gentle laugh as He spoke. He had patiently heard them out as they stated their case, reckoning up on the side of despair one point after another, which yet was all on the side of “everlasting comfort and good hope through grace.” Did He not feel, in His pure humanity—for the risen One is for ever human—that there was matter here to move a smile, as He proceeded to sweep the whole bewildered tangle of mistakes away for ever?

We know what followed; that wonderful Bible lesson, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets.” Till the sun was low He spoke and they listened. With faultless

and tender power He pressed the anodyne of the holy Word upon their aching wounds. To Him in His Resurrection the Scriptures were, if possible more than ever, the Oracle of God, manifold yet one; and He was everywhere their true Theme. So He led them on, till, *before they knew it was He*, by the pure power of the Spirit upon the written Word, they were again at rest, about Him, and upon Him.

And now the walk ended, and now they, so lately almost sullen at His intrusion, would not let Him go. "Abide with us;" and He obeyed. Then they saw Him break the bread. Then they knew Him for Himself.

What does the walk say to us after this fresh review? It tells us that "this same Jesus," for He is to-day the same, understands the human heart. He knows how to approach it patiently, bearing with its shy and even sullen reserve. He knows how to "lay Himself alongside" the disturbed and restive spirit. He knows how to make the hearts He loves burn with faith

and love towards Him. He knows how to make the sealed oracle stand open to the humbled soul, and how to tell the soul, through that oracle, about Himself. He knows how and when to let the veil drop, and to manifest Himself, "this same Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, for ever."

XVII

THE EMMAUS ROAD.—iii

"They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven."—St Luke xxiv. 33.

AGAIN, once again, we go out upon the Emmaus Road, and look for Cleopas and his friend. We have watched them to the end of their outward journey, with that unexpected and unknown Companion. Look, they have entered yonder house with Him, after a brief conversation at the door, as they press Him to join them for the night. Shall we see them again? Probably not; they will not stir out till morning. Nay, not so. Before very long the door opens, and our friends, Cleopas and the other, two now again, not three, step out and, at a pace far quicker than before, retrace their way and hurry through the shadows to

where the far-off evening lamps glimmer from Jerusalem.

It is a walk now not to, but from, Emmaus. We shall find a message in this walk also. Why had the two friends left Jerusalem and walked away to the distant village? Can we doubt that the main motive was the desolateness, the repellent sadness, the hostile gloom of Jerusalem, now the Lord was gone? More than this, may we not think, for the heart was then what it is to-day, that they left Jerusalem not only because it was the abode of triumphant enemies, but because there they would meet woe-begone friends? They would only be the more deeply sad for companionship with those who had hoped so much with them, and then, with them, had met so awful a disappointment. Such, almost for certain, was the mood in which Thomas (St John xx. 24) absented himself from his brethren that very evening. Such, in part at least, may well have been the feeling of these two.

There is a powerful *centrifugal* force in some forms of grief; not in all, but in some. Particularly, a bitter disappointment tends to disintegrate a circle. To use the expressive word common in Scripture, the disappointed man is "ashamed." He has been, he thinks, *fooled* by fortune. He would fain hide his face, and eat his troubled heart alone. To meet the partakers of his once cherished delusion is an unwelcome aggravation of his own mortified regret.

That force assuredly began to work when the Lord Jesus had died, and before His disciples knew that He was risen again. The circle began to break up here and there. Had He not risen, the centrifugal process would have gone on, for want of a central magnet. And had the centrifugal process gone on, there would be no Christian Church to-day, and my reader and I would have been engaged with other themes than the person and influence of a half-forgotten Rabbi, who died in Judea very long ago.

Now let us think again of those two men

hastening through the deep shadows towards the city. They are under the power of a *centripetal* force. They are bent upon rejoining their friends, for they have now good tidings of great joy to carry to them ; and a great joy, particularly supposing it to be also a pure and noble joy, cannot rest without communication. So they make their way to the city, and to that upper chamber which had so lately been the disciples' rendezvous, that they may share their glorious secret. And they find their friends there with similar tidings so ready on their lips that the travellers have no time to speak first : "The Lord is risen indeed."

The Resurrection drew them all with one mighty embrace together ; or rather, not the Resurrection, but the risen Lord.

Here is a weighty matter for the student of Christian evidence ; one of the vast moral proofs which gather around the victory of our Master over "the dreadful tomb." It will bear close attention, and will reward it with a fresh conviction of the profound

ultimate harmony of faith and reason at the door of Joseph's sepulchre.

But this is not all. The glad speed of the happy pilgrims of Emmaus back to Jerusalem tells us also some permanent spiritual truths. It says to us that nothing so draws human hearts together as a living and conscious contact with Jesus Christ. It bids us hope, amidst the countless confusions and disputes of thought, not in the world only but in the Church, that we shall yet find in a fresh Heaven-given realization of His life and love the great antidote to the earth-born spirit of division in our poor Christendom. And to the individual believer it says that he will surely find, in the experience of his soul, that two things will regularly rise and fall together—the personal contact of faith and love with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the longing impulse to tell others of His glory and His grace.

XVIII

THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—i

“Then . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst.”—St John
xx. 19.

It was the late evening of the Resurrection Day. In our last Sunday's study we traced that eventful day through the afternoon to some time after sunset, when the two pedestrians of the Emmaus Road hastened back to the city with their great discovery. Here we are admitted to a glimpse of the place where that return-walk ended, and of the event which presently occurred there.

We follow them to the city gate, which then probably, for it was Passover time, stood open all night. We trace them to the street where the house of the upper chamber stood; to the courtyard gate, fastened, “for fear of the Jews,” but opened to the known

voices outside ; to the inner door, up a flight of stone steps, and opening direct into the great room. This also was unlocked, at the call of friends. And now the two streams of wonder and joy met together ; the chamber was full of voices. " The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon ; " " We too have met Him on the road ; He made Himself known to us in the breaking of bread."

What a scene of eager interchange of heart and speech ! The spacious place, where light and shadow play from the evening lamps upon the company, is full of broken sound. Such a moment had never been on earth before. An event of infinite wonder was before them, as it were at their very feet. The dead was living, and in His own right and power. The seeming awful defeat of the Cross was only the antecedent to the supreme and irreversible victory in which the beloved Master, taking His life again, presented Himself as indeed the Life, " declared Himself to be the Son of God

with power," "the power of an endless life,"
"by the resurrection from the dead."

"Behold, He made all things new."

Let us often return in thought to that memorable hour. Again and yet again let us reaffirm to ourselves its immeasurable reality and radiant meaning. Vain, even to the understanding, even to common sense, are the efforts, whether crude or subtle, to explain it away. Sometimes the attempt is made with actually grotesque crudeness, as in a paper sent me lately from India, gravely asserting that the Lord Jesus revived from half-death, lived to a good old age, and lies buried—in Cashmere. Sometimes the denial takes very different forms, graver, more thoughtful, more formidable. But all alike break and retreat at last, like waves from the shore, before the vast, immovable evidence of the fact of the Christian Church, and the historic certainty that but for a great and manifest victory of the Lord over the death of His sacred body the Church would soon have melted back into the world.

Whereas, on the contrary, it promptly presented itself to the world as a force full of Him, an organism of transfigured lives, morally lifted to a height unknown before, totally different from their old selves, and spiritually capable of moving the whole human mass around them, "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of their God."

As we ponder the Resurrection, the two opposite aspects of it will appear equally important. On the one side is its literal verity, as an event of history, certain and trustworthy to the full along every line of inquiry and test proper to historical problems. On the other side is its supernatural mystery and significance; its process, defying, or rather transcending, imagination; its sequel, in which we see as it were eternity visibly inserted into time, a Being walking on earth, and taking meals at His friends' tables, and talking at great length to them, while yet the conditions of His bodily existence are inscrutable, miraculous, half celestial already.

The two aspects combine, for the thoughtful believer's mind, into one feeling of profound reliance upon the supreme and boundless trustworthiness of the risen Lord, as Fact, and as Power. Thinking ourselves back into that upper chamber we can repose ourselves before Him, while He tries our faith now by His silence, which leaves so much unexplained, and now by His words, as He speaks of things inconceivable to us as of simple certainties to Himself, and tells us, for example, that we, hereafter, having seen corruption, shall rise in glory. The Speaker is adequate to the promise. It is the Christ of God arisen.

But now a hush falls upon the groups in that spacious room. The doors, fastened again after the entrance of the two men from Emmaus, have not been again disturbed. Yet another person is on a sudden with them, in bodily presence. He takes His place in the midst, and smiles, and speaks. It is the Lord.

XIX

THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—ii

"Then . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst."—St John
xx. 19.

WE placed ourselves last Sunday amidst the disciples, apostles and others, who saw the sudden, silent presence of the risen Lord in the midst of them while they were so preoccupied with talk about Him. The scene in itself is a means of grace. We may often say, each of us, with the Christian poet—

'Tis light at evening-time when Thou art present;
Thy coming to the eleven in that dim room
Brighten'd, O Christ, its gloom;
So bless my lonely hour that memories pleasant
Around the time a heavenly gleam may cast
Which many days shall last!

But now let us turn to some of the spiritual messages of that hour.

It is full of such messages. It tells us,

for example, how true the heavenly Master is to His promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." He who is our Advocate above, in the celestial glory, on the divine throne, helped our faith to a firmer grasp on that great fact of the Unseen by offering, just once, here on earth, in audible speech, before His followers, that great example and specimen of His advocacy, the "High Priestly Prayer" of St John xvii. Even so He who invisibly, inscrutably, yet really, is always now present in each gathering of His dear disciples, helped their faith to hold that truth more fast and more fully by that visible entrance in among them after Resurrection.

Again, to take another example, the scene carries to us in living form that great message, that peace, joy, and power for His disciples are inseparably united to personal relations with Himself. How did the peace of God, passing understanding, come to them that night? By the manifested presence of Him

who first said, "Peace be unto you," and then showed them His hands and His side. He came as His own supreme Evangelist, in His own utterance of "peace." He let them see Him as His own supreme Evangel, in His finished Sacrifice and that glorious sequel of it, His living Presence. So it is for ever. There is no substitute, nor ever can be, for personal relations with Christ, crucified and risen. Would we taste a "peace" which is indeed "of God"? It must be "through our Lord Jesus Christ," as not a Principle only but a Person. Faith must see His wounds; faith must hear His benediction, nothing between; resting direct on Him. Only so will our life have banished out of it the bewilderment, the misgiving, which lie at the troubled heart of half-religion.

And when He poured into them "the oil of gladness," how was it? By His same wonderful yet divinely simple manifestation of Himself. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." He, the "Man

of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as indeed He was, and is—in the sense of that great saying, "To suffer passes, to have suffered, lasts for ever" *—is yet, to the believing soul, "my exceeding joy" (Ps. xliii. 4), by just being what He is, and being, in all that He is, present with His own. In His religion, while there is abundant room for holy griefs, there is no place for melancholy, which is the grief of perplexity and weakness. Christ is essentially not only peace but joy, just because in Him holiness, love, and power converge upon issues of victorious happiness for Him and for His. And our enjoyment of Him as our joy will be great in proportion to our faith's "sight" of Him as such. Look not for joy at a distance from Him, as a thing merely derived and secondary. "*In Thy presence is the fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures*" (note the word) "*for evermore.*"

Then, when what they need is power, the

* *Souffrir passe ; avoir souffert demeure éternellement.*

secret is the same. Soon they were to leave "that dim room" for the outer world, with all its sins and all its enmity. They would need power indeed, not apart from peace and from joy, by no means, yet as a thing special and distinct. And it is the Lord Jesus Himself who gives it. "I send you;" "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And the Holy Ghost is so inseparably connected with Jesus Christ that the symbol and warrant of the gift of Him came in the form of the very breath from the immortal lips of the Giver. And when that Gift is given, and *is received*, we know what the surest index of Its presence is; it is the growing greatness of Christ to the soul, and His growing power over it from within. "He shall glorify me;" "Strengthened by the Spirit, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

So the message of the upper room is, *Christ is All*. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" "come in, and sup with us, and we with Thee."

XX

THE FIRST EASTER EVENING.—iii

“Even so send I you.”—St John xx. 21.

WE return to the upper chamber for one more study.

It is deeply instructive to observe the Lord's use of the occasion to remind His disciples at once of *their mission*. We might have thought it likely that that aspect of things would be reserved and postponed for a season. The very day of the Resurrection, we might imagine, would be given wholly to the consolation of the griefs of the disciples and to their profound enjoyment of the recovered, the more than recovered, Lord. On the walk to Emmaus, apparently, He had on the whole done so; giving no commands, simply chasing the mist of hopeless sorrow before the summer sun of His undying presence. But then

again His very first appearance to Mary in the Garden, loveliest gem of all the narratives of Scripture, speaks another lesson. He had indeed addressed Himself first to her broken heart, and shown her how He understood her tears, and uttered her name in a tone which opened up all His heart to her. But then, He had at once sent her on an errand; instantly there was work for her to do for Him for others. "Go unto My brethren."

She first, all-happy Magdalena, bore
From Joseph's grot the bliss unheard before;

telling the apostles themselves that the Lord was risen, and on His way to the eternal throne. Yes, and the men of Emmaus, if they had no direct command to that effect, acted as if they had. As we saw a few Sundays since, their joy was *centripetal*. They were driven by holy instinct to communicate. They felt a mission to their brethren in the city, and hastened back to fulfil it.

So at the evening meeting. The Lord

cannot let the happy company go with nothing upon their hearts but their own happiness, even though it was the purest happiness in Him. He lays *a mission* upon them, with a very definite commission, and He breathes divine power into them in view of it. "As my Father sent Me, even so send I you." "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Those last words I do not elaborately examine here. My conviction is that they were meant by the Lord in a sense as luminous, as perspicuous, as it was deep. Neither Scripture nor earliest Christian history witnesses, so far as I know, to His having meant a mysterious hierarchical commission, such that remission of sins must be conveyed normally through a clerical stewardship, or even through the stewardship of the whole Christian body; as if the soul's perfectly direct access to the Lord Himself, spirit to Spirit, were impeded.

Rather, I take the words to be a commission to the Church to be the Master's messenger to souls, carrying to them His terms of pardon, and inviting them in His name to go with them to—Himself.

But there is no need for our purpose now to go further into this question. It is enough for us to remember the broad fact that the risen Lord Jesus did, then and there, give to His disciples first peace, then joy, but then also *mission*. He needed them for the purposes of His work in the world. He had truth to tell the world, and they must be His means of telling it. He had pardon, and holiness, and heaven, to impart to the world, and the impartation must be done through them as His agents, His very lips and tongue, as it were, charged with the proclamation of His covenant of life, and themselves instinct with that life ; not His machinery, but His body, for His work.

It was a blissful thing to meet in the upper room ; to sit there beneath the evening lamps, listening in quiet to “ the pleasant

voice of the Mighty One." But it was a bliss meant to issue in blessings for the unhappy world around. They must go forth to say, in His dear name, "Peace be unto you." They must point others to His hands and His side, till they too should be glad, seeing the Lord. Filled with the Holy Ghost, they must be living witnesses to others of the sacred pardon they had themselves received.

So that primeval congregation at last broke up, as commissioned messengers, and the room was dark and still again.

One of the most solemn of sights is a church left empty after divine worship and the preaching of the Word. Men and women have met before God—and dispersed to mix again with the world of common life. How have they gone? To be as if the holy hour had not been? Or to live amidst life's intercourse and action as those who have seen the Lord, and tasted His joy, and received His Spirit, and who remember that as the Father sent Him, even so sends He them?

XXI

LAKE-SIDE THOUGHTS

“Jesus showed Himself to His disciples by the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.”—St John xxi. 1.

FAIR and beautiful is the narrative of John xxi. Very few pictures, even in the long and luminous gallery of the Bible, surpass it in respect of either its landscape, or its figures, or their action. Have we not often shut the eyes, as it were, to the printed page that the scene may “flash upon the inner eye”?

But to-day I attempt no long “re-telling” of the inimitable, the inspired simplicity of the story as it came, touch by touch, to the pen of the aged John from his deep, clear memory. I ask my reader to reconsider it only that it may tell us some truths about our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may afresh “believe that He is the Christ, the Son of

God, and believing may have life through His name."

That is the aim and reason of the whole Bible. Assuredly it is the great purpose of every Gospel narrative. Not to please the imagination, though nothing can so charm it as these holy scenes, but to make the Lord Jesus great and present to us—this is the purpose.

Looking then upon Him as presented to us in John xxi. we note Him first as dealing with His beloved disciples through trial for blessing. Can we doubt that the long and quite fruitless "night of toil" was ordered by His will, or let us put it rather so, was allowed in order to the attainment of His end? If they had "caught nothing" all through those dark hours upon the flood there would have been far less preparation and fitness for the wonder and the joy of the morning. Yes, it was He assuredly, the Son of Man who rules all creation, "the fish of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas," who willed them all

away that night from the nets of His friends.

Jesus Christ sees far, and He plans on lines that "go off into mystery," though always, for His servants, into blessing. Let us learn a new lesson of personal confidence in Him by that midnight waterside. Wait for "the end of the Lord;" it will be seen to-morrow morning.

In a remote churchyard in Cambridge-shire I read a few years ago an epitaph, nearly a century old, on two aged sisters. The text included in it was, "When the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore." It seemed to me to sum up lives in which the patience of faith had been the guiding principle. Those two forgotten disciples had trusted through the night and the toil. They were willing to wait. They knew it would be well to-morrow morning.

Then, the Lord appears in this scene before us in the solemnity, yet the blessed peace, of His absolute, autocratic masterhood. "If I will that he tarry, what is

that to thee? Follow thou Me." It is the tone of one who, if not God, is speaking infinitely beyond His rights. Who is He, that He should treat these two profound human personalities, this great pair of heroic saints, as pieces on a chess-board, to be moved as He thinks fit as in some game He may be playing? He is Jesus Christ, over all, blessed for ever. He is only acting upon His lawful footing. He has made, and He may dispose. Aye, but also "He has made, and He will bear" (Isa. xlv. 4). His imperial tone is not that of the *mere* autocrat, vain of his authority, and enjoying it, cost what it may to the subject. It is that of the Divine Possessor, who holds indeed infinite rights over his possession, but who also cares for it with an individual and tenacious love. Those who know Him know that He is "altogether lovely," not as Saviour only, but as Saviour King.

Lastly, as we take from St John xxi. these specimens of its witness to Jesus, let us look at the Lord as He prepares the meal

upon the beach, and gathers those seven men round Him, and gives them the food from the fire of coals. See here His character on that side of it so precious to us men, His holy love of our society, His kind, affectionate concern for our commonest needs, His *philanthropy*, His "attachment to man"! Those seven men were indeed saints, by His grace. But they were also merest men; they were peasants, men of the people, Galileans, provincials in a region which itself was provincial to the centres of the fastidious civilization of that time. And He was the Son of God, radiant and sublime in His immortality, mysteriously entered upon through the great Passion which redeemed a world. Yet "He loved the people; all His saints were in His hand; they sat down at His feet" (and at His side); "every one received of His words" (see Deut. xxxiii. 3).

He is the same Jesus still. His "philanthropy" is identical to-day. O man, mere man, sinful man, He does not love thy sin.

But He loves thee. He loves thy human nature, thy human company. And He is able to make thee, by being thy Friend, fully capable of companionship with Him.

XXII

“JOINED TO THE LORD, ONE SPIRIT”

“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”—1 Cor. vi. 17.

HERE is a sentence deep as eternal truth can make it. Yet it stands in a context full of the harshest realities of tempted human life. A recent Corinthian convert is in view. Last year, perhaps last month, he was the slave of sensual vice. And he is in grave danger of returning to the mire, for he still has to live close to it. But he is now a Christian; not a great or advanced Christian, yet a Christian in truth. He has found his Saviour, and surrendered himself to His life-giving hands. Therefore he has a vast resource of strength with which to resist the evil, or rather to rise above it, as a bird can spring on its long wings from beside the snare to the deep

freedom of the skies. The man has spiritual wings, to escape upward to God. Has he come to the Lord? Then he is "joined to Him." There is vital continuity between Christ and the man. The forces of Christ are at his disposal, in immediate contact; a contact so deep and essential that it can only be expressed thus: Christ and the Christian are "one spirit."

Let him recollect that fact, and use it, meeting the enemy with the Friend who has knit up His glorious Self with His weak disciple. So he shall "more than conquer." He shall "mount up with wings," and look down from above on the snares of hell.

So it was then; so it is to-day. The realities of life are still stern and urgent. Fierce are the temptations that still beset the weak will, at its weakest point. And still there is a way, present as it is divine, for victory, and more than victory, over the devil, the world, and the flesh.

"One spirit." The words lead us straight

to the thought of the Holy Ghost. In view of St Paul's general teaching, we may boldly take them as a short expression of the truth that when man comes in his need to Christ, for pardon, and for moral purity, then man is linked, by no mere impersonal influence, but by the living "Lord, the Life-Giver" (as the Greek of our Nicene Creed calls Him), in a vital bond, with his Redeemer. As the life-forces from the centre of our own being articulate into oneness our head, and feet, and hands, so the Spirit of the eternal Life makes one the believer and the Lord.

It transcends all our analysis, but not our reasonable faith. More and more to-day we meet examples of the hidden force which one human spirit can, as it were, project into another, lawfully or not. Then why hesitate to think that the Divine Spirit can so occupy our spirit, not violating but indwelling, as to transform it within itself, and so articulate it to the life and will of Jesus Christ that it shall be no mere

metaphor to say that we are spiritually His limbs?

“A member of Christ.” Such we Christians are, as to God’s gift. And what God gives, in Word and Sacrament, *we must take*, if we would have it real to us. The soul must welcome in its promised Lord, opening itself to His wonderful offered life, drinking in with its thirsty lips the stream of His Spirit. We must clasp the Christ offered us in His sacramental promise, yielding to Him, using Him. Then indeed we are “joined to the Lord,” His living limbs, He and we one spirit.

Within our veins His currents be,
His Spirit on our breath.

Such, in some measure, is the Pentecostal truth; such is this mysterious but most practical work of the Holy Ghost. He, according to Scripture, operates always for us with reference to the Son of God. He “glorifies” Christ. He brings us “to the obedience and the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.” By Him we are “strengthened,

that Christ may dwell in our hearts," welcomed in by unfearing faith. He is the One Spirit of the one Body; animating, uniting; blessed be His sacred Name.

In closing, let us recollect some practical issues of the Christian's limb-relation, by the Spirit, to the Son of God.

(i.) Here is a profound secret of liberty and power. My Redeemer is no mere distant Potentate, nor even merely a Friend at hand. He is in contact with my inmost being, so that His will, His love, His power, are given to run, as it were, into me. Is this no dream, but His revelation? Then let me walk out in the path of His will habitually recollecting that it is so. Christ's limb bears Christ's life. It never need serve sin. It never need shun God's will.

(ii.) Here is a summons, clear and high, to a life of willing service to my Lord. Am I one spirit with Him, His living limb indeed? Then my true life is—to be the willing implement of His will. Our limbs exist, in the order of nature, not for themselves but for

the imperial will above them. What is the function of my right hand? To do my will. And its health, its very life, depend on its articulation as my implement into me. Well, I am to Christ the hand, the foot, the lips. I exist, in union with Him, for use by Him. There is my wonderful function. There, too, is the law of my inmost health, power and joy. To serve Him is thus indeed to reign.*

(iii.) Lastly, here is the living warrant for our great hope, the resurrection of the dead, the life of the world to come.

Can the Head forsake the limb,
And not draw it after Him?

No, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also bring to life your mortal bodies, by His Spirit dwelling in you” (Rom. viii. 11).

Nearly three centuries ago, good Bishop Hall set out this truth in his peculiar style

* *Cui servire est regnare* (ancient Collect).

of quaint beauty: "It is abundant comfort to us that our Head is in the fruition of that glory whereto we, the poor labouring part, strive to aspire. Our Head is above water, though we the limbs are yet wading through the stream."

XXIII

THE HOLY TRINITY

“God is Love.”—1 John iv. 8, 16.

PERHAPS the reader, looking at this page, feels some surprise that such a title should go with such a text. The title directs our thoughts to a subject which is in any case a supreme mystery, and which to many minds presents itself as a theological riddle without a solution. The text, with its sublime simplicity, its three short words, each of them so luminous and so great, seems rather to direct us to thoughts level to the little child; to invite us away from every intellectual difficulty to a perfect rest, a quiet anchorage for soul and mind.

Yet the title and the text, if we approach them patiently and with prayer, will soon prove to be friends quite ready to embrace

one another in a perfect harmony of meaning and message. Let us address ourselves to this thought, with our spirit's ear open to the voice of Him who on the one hand "dwells in the light unapproachable," and on the other hand is Love.

(i.) The Holy Trinity. What does the Christian Church mean, in the essence of its meaning, when it affirms its faith in the Trinity in Unity, the Unity in Trinity? Very briefly, we may reply as follows.

The Holy Scriptures, from first to last, emphasize with awful earnestness the Oneness of God, the unique and solitary glory of the Eternal Being, in respect of that Being's sole possession of self-existence, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and of those supreme rights over all other being which can attach to the sovereign Maker and Sustainer alone. "I am the Lord; My glory will I not give to another;" "The Lord thy God is One Lord;" that is the voice of Moses, Prophets, Apostles, Christ.

But then the same Holy Scriptures, in

some degree from the first, and more and more to the last, give us another side of truth also. Pointing to the One Light of the One Godhead, they bid us listen to sounds from within that Light. Hearken; it is the voice of the Mighty One. Hearken again; the Voice can be heard also as Voices. In music, one glorious sound, as it peals from the organ through the minster, can be heard also by the instructed ear as three sounds in one—a *triad*, as the musician calls it; a chord, in which oneness has within it more-than-oneness, so that it is at once one and three. Hearken then again at the shrine of Light, and you will hear a Triune Voice. There is One within the Sanctuary saying, “Thou art My Son, in whom I am well pleased.” There is Another who answers, saying, “I delight to do Thy will; Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” There is yet another Voice, in which the Two wonderfully blend, yet bearing its own tone also; it speaks breathing from within that Light, and it says to

us, "Come and know ; come and see ; come and live."

In other words, the Bible distinctly tells us that the Godhead is, *within the Oneness*, more than One. It presents to us Three Persons (we can use no weaker word), not fewer nor more, but Three ; all within the sphere of the Supreme Being, for all have eternal and infinite power, wisdom, goodness ; so related that never, from eternity to eternity, are They separate, but for ever One in Their blessed Being ; so distinguished that from One to Other flows, for ever, in a fathomless and holy tide, the fulness of infinite Love.

(ii.) "God is Love." Is the text then, after all, out of tune with the title ? "God is Love." The words are, as we have said, sublimely *simple* ; yes, they are level to the heart of the little child. But then, they are *sublimely* simple. When we ponder them, there is a radiant depth in each, clear but unfathomable. Who can spell out all that is hidden in God ? Who can analyse

to all its depths what, in regard of Him, is meant by LOVE? Who can see all the splendour shining from that link of life between them, "God is Love"? For it tells us that the Eternal does not only know what love means, nor only feel it as an emotion coming over Him. He is Love; it is His Essence, it is His Nature, it is His Life. Before all thoughts of loving action going out from Him stands here this radiant truth that Love lives and breathes for ever *in* Him, as it were His very Self.

Now is not this almost a confession already of the glory of the Holy Trinity? For the faith of the Trinity is but the faith that the inner Life of Godhead is no awful Solitude, but a blissful Society which yet is One. It says that there is a glorious sphere within the "One Eternal" for mutual Affection, infinite in measure, absolute in tenderness and joy. It tells us that at the heart and at the head of the universe of being there lives, and wills, and acts, not a remote Unit, but a gracious Unity, within whose bright

Essence, "dark with excess of bright," Love is always meeting Love. And it bids therefore, not the little child only but the life-worn man, conscious of sin, of sorrow, of the grave, look upwards towards the Infinite with a certainty, deep as existence, that He can indeed be trusted and be loved, for He is Love.

So God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit we adore,
A sea of life and love unknown,
Without a bottom or a shore.

XXIV

“WITH CHRIST”

“I am continually with Thee.”—Ps. lxxiii. 23.

“To depart, and to be with Christ.”—Phil. i. 23.

“We shall ever be with the Lord.”—1 Thess. iv. 17.

HERE are three Scriptures with one message, three gems strung on one golden thread. The first refers to the life present, here and now, in the flesh, on the pilgrimage. The second takes us to the life after death, the state of souls, the home of the just made perfect. The third opens to us the prospect of the resurrection-glory, the final and eternal bliss. Each view, each region of time and being, has its own distinctive aspect and character. But for each and all these Scripture words give us one and the same secret for rest and hope; it is, the Companionship of the Lord. Alike for “life, death, and that vast For Ever,” the answer of peace

is the same. The Christian quiets and strengthens himself for trial here and for the unseen things hereafter, reminding himself of an inalienable talisman which can charm all ill away and bring all blessing to him, alike "on the journey and in the fatherland," when he repeats to himself those words, "with Thee," "with Christ," "with the Lord."

"The great Companion"! It is indeed a recollection of peace. A gifted contemporary of mine at college, betrayed into mournful wanderings in the use of one of the finest of minds, till he reached at length what seemed a total unbelief, wrote in one of his books the words, full of an infinite sadness as I think of them, and of him, "*the great Companion is gone.*" That would be the death-knell of all human joy, worth calling joy, if it were true. But it is not true, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As we repeat that apostolic doxology does it not already calm us with a self-evidencing power? Let the

bewildered reason, lost in the forest labyrinths of the thought which has ceased to worship, turn again to contemplate, as if for the first time, that “Holiest of Holies, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Let it ponder “the fact of Christ.” It will assuredly, if it does so in simplicity, come to see that He, as we have Him in the Word, could not possibly be the invention, or even the evolution, of the human mind. That portrait, by those artists, could only be drawn, or rather photographed, from life. And it is the portrait of One who cannot but be—the great Companion.

Disciple of the great Companion, who died and rose again, and is alive for evermore, take then this watchword with you, and live for time and for eternity on its resources.

(i.) “I am continually with Thee.” This was Asaph’s word, after the tremendous conflict with doubt which his Psalm so candidly discloses to us. He emerged by the mercy of God, into a certainty, full of

rest and hope, that he had the great Companion for his own. The air around him might be thick with mysteries, and his view of their solution in detail might be very dim at the best. But he had the great Companion; he was continually with Him; the hand of his eternal Friend was holding him, even in the dark. The Lord knew; and he knew the Lord; and the Lord and he were close together. That was enough. "Christ is alive to-day," wrote the late Dr Dale, of Birmingham, beginning to prepare a sermon. And his own words flashed back upon his soul a new consciousness of Christ, transforming everything. Let us take the watchword up for our own life, and complete it; "Christ is alive to-day; and we are continually with Him."

(ii.) "To depart, and to be with Christ." Such was St Paul's outlook into the state of souls. His immediately added words are, "which is far better." Better than what? Is it

Far better, yes, than pain and care, than weariness and strife,
Than fading hopes and gathering fears, and all the death of
life ?

Not at all. He has just been giving us his own estimate of what life—life in the body—is to him. It is a grand estimate. He has said that to him “to live is *Christ*.” And what can possibly be “far better” than that? Nothing, except a very much larger measure of the same. So the state of souls is no state of abeyance, or of shadows; it is a life indeed; “far better” than the best hour on earth of an apostolic life of holy and rejoicing service. It is a nearness, conscious and ineffable, face to Face, spirit to Spirit, love to Love, with the great Companion.

(iii.) “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Here is the final prospect, the promise for the endless end. It is St Paul again who speaks, writing to his bereaved Thessalonian brethren, and telling them of the eternal and ultimate joy, “the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”

What does he say about that life? True to his Inspirer's example, he gives no detail, but goes straight to the essence, to "the heart of heaven in its clearness." And that is just this companionship with the great Companion. "We shall ever be with the Lord."

And on the other hand, in the miracle of His grace and love, that Companion will delight Himself for ever in our company! "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am."

XXV

THE SAFETY OF SAMUEL

"And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him."—1 Sam. iii. 19.

THE story of Samuel shines out in the Biblical portrait gallery through a series of even unusually life-like pictures. From Hannah's silent prayer when Eli so greatly mistook her state and her spirit, to that mysterious and awful scene in the cavern at En-dor when the departed saint returned to warn Saul of his end, the name of Samuel takes us over a course of narrative which has a power and solemn beauty of its own.

Let us linger a little this Sunday over that first stage of his life, his residence at Shiloh, prolonged till the little child, the child taken so pathetically early from home ("the child was young," as the moving

words run, 1 Sam. i. 24) was grown up into the young prophet, whom all Israel knew.

Two impressive lessons, permanent for all human time, are read to us by those first experiences of Samuel. They are the opposites of each other. In the first place we have the dark phenomenon of Hophni and Phinehas. There, in the very sanctuary of Jehovah, in the priestly line, under the paternal presence of Eli (and Eli would not have "judged" Israel had he not been in some respects a noble man as well as a good one), dwelt two men who sinned with a high hand, habitually, grossly, and so as to poison the whole moral air around them.

It is one of numerous reminders in the Bible that official religion may be no barrier whatever to personal wickedness; a lesson taught us from the prophet Balaam down to the priest Caiaphas and the apostle Judas. It is an awful and far-reaching warning. Let us not judge Balaam, or Hophni, or Caiaphas, or Judas. Let us consider ourselves. "Many" will, "in that day," plead

with the Redeemer Himself in their infinite alarm to spare them because they once had external communion with Him; "eating and drinking in His presence," and listening, perhaps with high *approval*, to His "teaching in the streets." In vain; "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." May almighty mercy deliver us from the fatal snare of external without internal religion.

Then, in the second place, comes the message of the safety of Samuel in the place poisoned by Hophni and Phinehas. Did his pious mother know to what tremendous risks she was exposing him? She can scarcely have been quite unaware. But we may suppose that her faith, quickened by the manifest divine answer to her prayers in the fact that she was his mother, rose to the assurance that the Eternal Himself would watch over her darling when, keeping her vow, she "lent him to the Lord." If so, she is the prototype and the encouragement of many a mother of later days, who has

been compelled, under some inevitable condition of life, to trust her Samuel to be kept pure amidst surroundings charged with strong temptation. If it is right that he should go, the Lord of the first Samuel can keep the latest Samuel safe, by the same secret which worked so powerfully so long ago.

Eli, to be sure, would shepherd the little Levite with affectionate anxiety. We can well believe that his weakness with his own rebel sons would only quicken his care over the young life which he held so much in his hands still. But who does not know how fatally strong can be a young man's bad influence over a boy, quite overmastering the weaker hold of an aged friend? If a power greater than Eli's had not been upon Samuel, he would have gravitated almost for certain to the attraction of the wicked priests, just because they were nearer to his own age. But a greater, a victorious Power was there, upon him, around him, within him. "He grew;" words that might have

only led to the sequel, "and so he fell." But then comes the divinely saving clause, "and the Lord was with him." So he stood, and walked at liberty, and "served in humbleness and fear," and had ears for the very voice of the Holy One, and came forth at last the mighty messenger and minister of His will.

No place is safe which we enter against the will of God. No place can hurt us which we enter according to His will, and where we remember and respond to His presence.

The naturalist tells us of insects whose proper habitat is the air, but whose food is found below the water of, perhaps, a stagnant pool. They descend to find it, and in safety. For it is given them to collect about them a globe or envelope of air, and this protects them as they dive. Such was the Presence to Samuel at Shiloh; such it can be to us to-day.

A beloved kinsman of mine, long since departed to the Lord, was sent, a gentle lad

fresh from home, to a military college. That college was then, below the surface, a scene of deplorable vice. No man of iron by nature, he was yet made strong in the Lord, just as he entered, by the discovery of his Saviour in a full conversion. "He grew, and the Lord was with him." When, crowned with high distinction, after a three years' residence, he left the college, vice was out of fashion there.

Blessed be his dear memory. Blessed be his Lord's dear Presence.

XXVI

AT THE DOOR OF THE ETERNAL TENTS

"That, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."—St Luke xvi. 9.

THE best supported reading of the Greek here bids us make one material change. Instead of, "when ye fail" we should read, "when it shall fail;" that is to say when it, "the mammon of unrighteousness," shall drop away from you at death. This change leaves however unchanged the important point that the reference of the sentence is to death, to our hour of dissolution; not to the final prospect of the glorification of the disciple's whole being at resurrection, but to that mysterious time when our "flesh and heart faileth," and the external world of our mortal experience "faileth" from around us.

One word more upon translation. The Greek which is represented by "everlasting habitations" invites the more definite and vivid rendering, "the eternal tents." It is a clearly drawn picture. The Lord Jesus puts before our thought the unknown land beyond the veil of sense. The departing spirit enters it, to find, as it were, an encampment of the blessed ones who have already entered in. The "earthly house of this *tabernacle*" has, it would appear, its counterpart there. Perhaps to convey the truth that the conditions between death and resurrection are transitional, not final, the holy dwelling-places are imaged rather as tents than more solid structures; tents pitched in the Garden of Bliss, for the Israel of that happy Exodus in which "the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, are in joy and felicity."

So much for some details of the translation of this remarkable passage. But the main interest of it, for our purpose to-day,

lies in those words which no examination of the Greek can alter, "*that they may receive you.*"

I need only remind the reader in passing what is the context, the environment, of that phrase. The Lord, in this remarkable parable of the Steward, has told us how, by a financial stratagem, by using his discretion apparently in lowering the tenants' rate of rent in kind, the steward had secured himself a lasting welcome to the tenants' houses. From this the Divine Teacher draws the unexpected lesson that we too, if we will, may secure a loving *hospitality*, an affectionate *welcome in*, to abodes of bliss after death, on the part of those whom we may have helped heavenward by our use of the "mammon" of earthly means and faculties, too often perverted to "unrighteousness." We may, under God, smooth the upward path, and bring the pilgrim happily home, so to speak, by our use for others of what the Saviour has entrusted to our stewardship. If so,

144 AT THE DOOR OF THE ETERNAL TENTS

and if the objects of our interest and aid have preceded us to Paradise, they, the denizens and, as it were, possessors of that blessed home will personally welcome us in when we come. They will, with thoughts of memory, gratitude and love, "receive us into the eternal tents." They will hail us as those to whom they owed so much in the dear days below.

The lesson of the passage, a ray of luminous truth and beauty shot from a deep and difficult context, has manifold aspects. But only one of these shall be set to-day before us; that which looks towards the question of mutual recognition in the unseen state.

Few, if any, passages of Scripture, if I am right, more definitely tell us that—

Though changed and glorified each face,
Not unremember'd we shall meet,
To endless ages to embrace.

For what does the Lord manifestly imply? That the doors of the abode of the blessed will be, and are, the scene of personal and welcoming interviews. Whatever be

the conditions and circumstances of the departed Christian soul, this is plain. The lips of Him who cannot lie, of Him who "has the keys of the Unseen and of death," assure us here of this. Just when everything of external resources "fails," then, out of sight, but in profound reality, a recognizing meeting takes place above in "the Paradise." The soul already at home sees and knows the soul just entering; remembers the incidents of the old life; recalls the benefit, the love, the obligation, and "receives" the new-comer not as some human being only, but as the particular human being who has proved so loving and so lovable.

We bless His faithful word
 Who once, in parable, withdrew the veil,
 And told us that, when here His servants fail,
 The tidings there is heard;

And friends with friendly feet
 Make haste, delighted at the glad event,
 And lift the white door of the eternal tent
 The arriving friend to greet.

Let us take this assurance, and use it, in

simplicity and truth. Let it not take an undue place in our thought and hope; the supremely *first* element in all Christian hopes of heaven must be, as we lately saw, the fact that "we shall ever be *with the Lord*." But this distinct prospect of a meeting, and more than meeting, full of memory and of love, vivid with mutual delight, is a glorious adjunct to that blessed prospect. Let us "comfort one another with these words."

Even so, Lord Jesus. Prepare us, by patient faith now, the faith which takes Thee at Thy Word, for that wonderful hour of sight, when *they* will hail us into *Thy* unveiled presence, blessed for ever.

XXVII

THE WELL OF SYCHAR.—i

"Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He."—
St John iv. 26.

It was the Samaritan woman to whom thus the Master spoke, sitting at the well of Sychar, tired in limb, untired in patience and in love.

A singular and beautiful interest attaches to that well. It is very nearly, if not quite, the only spot in the Holy Land where the pilgrim can say to himself, with reasonable certainty, that *here*, in a narrow and precise application of the word *here*, within the square of these few measured yards, once stood, once sate, the Lord. Of a score of localities we can be certain that He was *there*, in a sense less restricted. At Nazareth I have looked round the horizon of hills, and pondered the certainty that His eyes

were familiar with the same contour. Upon the beautiful Lake, upon the top of Olivet, in the streets of Bethlehem, the like thought lies with all its weight of wonder on the disciple's heart. But at Sychar we know that the well of to-day is the well of that immortal yesterday, so that there, just there, almost within the compass of a man's extended arms, Jesus our Lord was bodily present once.

The thought is not indeed all-important, however it may be impressive. Our certainties about Him who is our eternal Life and our "good Hope through grace" transcend the curiosities of topography to an infinite degree. Yet the contemplation of the narrow, memorable spot has a spiritual use. It can aid the soul, however little, yet in reality, to concentrate, and to define, and to carry home to the imagination, so as to be made more concrete there for thought and faith, our spiritual certainty.

May it somehow thus serve us now, by His grace, and for His glory. Listening to

the colloquy by the side of that old Syrian well, may we the better recollect and embrace the sameness, yesterday, and to-day, and even unto the long for-ever, of the heart, the will, the love, the Lord, who once said, beside it, "I that speak unto thee am He."

That was a very wonderful utterance, in the clear depth of its simplicity, the monosyllabic simplicity which it wears in our English Bible. And it was the climax of a very wonderful conversation, wonderful in itself, wonderful in the parties to it. There, on *this* side, sate the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the blessed Christ. "Formed in fashion as Man," as true man, as tired man, as thirsty man, He sate there; only the more gracious and the more great because of the fact, which in Him and in Him alone was so marvellous, that He was Man. Holy, harmless, awfully undefiled, infinitely separate from the sinfulness of us sinners, higher than the heavens, He was yet, quite as really, the fatigued wayfarer,

fain to rest just as He was,* on that rude seat, in a humiliation as mysterious and as sacred as His glory. There, on the other side, stood the poor Samaritan, setting down her heavy cruse, to look Him cheerlessly and aimlessly in the face. Her lot, her character, her heart, what was it all? She was a damaged and broken instance of our fallen humanity; a provincial, a common woman, sinned against and sinning, discontented and embittered, vexed with circumstances, at discord with herself, and so far hardened by the sad forces of a life lived away from God and tolerant of its own sin, that she would fain fence and parry with all her power when the thirsty Stranger turned from the request for water to speak about her God and about her soul.

Deep and moving is this contrast, Jesus and the Woman. And as we reflect upon it we remember that it is, in its essence, permanent, immortal. It is as enduring as

* He "sate *thus* on the well." The Greek *οἴτως* seems to indicate the unstudied attitude of sheer fatigue.

is the Saviour of man upon the one side, and as is the human heart, with which He comes to deal, upon the other. Let us seek our message of this Lord's day from that fact.

The Samaritan is not a person only, but a type. She is—may I not confidently say it?—the very picture of the soul aloof from God, in its debasement, its pollution, its unrest, its spiritual dulness and *ennui*. Do we see nothing of ourselves, in the days of our ignorance and alienation, in this poor peasant of Sychar? Indifferent, yet ill at ease, averse to true knowledge either of self or of God, soiled with many a stain—some of them external stains, some of them hidden deeper, too deep perhaps in the heart to look out on the surface of the life—is there nothing in all this to which conscience and consciousness respond from within? Does not our personality stand, in hers, confronting the Lord, and confronted by Him, in a contrast to Him which cannot be measured? Are not we, in her, searched, and rebuked,

and shown something of our own inbred alienation and isolation from Him? "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, and Thou knowest it too well. Do not look upon me so, do not look through me so. I must be repellent to Thee; for I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

XXVIII

THE WELL OF SYCHAR.—ii

“Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.”—
St John iv. 26.

WE listened and looked, at the well of Sychar, in our last Sunday's meditations. The interview spoke to us, perhaps in an unexpected way and measure, of ourselves. It placed before us a Jesus Christ whose juxtaposition with us cannot but force the soul to pause upon itself and ask what to Him it looks like, and whether He can be otherwise than repelled by what we are.

It is certainly thus, not seldom, with many hearts, and hearts which are by no means extreme examples, on human standards, of human sinning. Let *the average heart* be brought to any measure of real spiritual consciousness by the awful beauty of the moral face of Christ; it will

do nothing less than writhe under the tremendous difference ; I use the word “ tremendous ” with deliberate intention. “ Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Mine eye seeth Thee ; therefore I abhor myself.” There is nothing like that sight to engender that abhorrence, which, taken by itself, would be the beginning of the final despair.

But now turn again to the interview of Sychar. What is the Lord, the Christ, the Holy One, actually doing with this poor, weary, dreary, uninteresting, unhallowed human being ? He is offering her, upon the spot, the life eternal. He is expounding and unfolding to her—HIMSELF. “ If thou wouldst have asked of Me, I would have given thee living water.” “ I that speak unto thee am He.”

There are few scenes, even in the blessed Gospels, which throw into such supreme relief as this the willingness of our Lord Jesus Christ to save a soul, to save it from itself, by Himself, and to do it then and

there. I know not where else to go for a lovelier and more living illustration of that willingness, that promptitude, of a love which is its own eternal origin, to come and pour its inmost blessings out upon what we should call the most unpromising, the most unalluring of hearts. Poor Samaritan, who can care for her? No one—but the Son of God. And *how* will He care for her? Will it be by giving her a long preliminary discipline? Will it be by putting her to school on low levels of truth? Will it be by consigning her to His apostles till she is educated up to a capacity for Him? No; it will be by unveiling to her His own loving glory, “nothing between.” It will be by the gift to her, without one shadow of intermediation, of His own eternal life. It will be by transforming her into a spiritual worshipper of Him who is a Spirit, in letting her see her Saviour in the Christ of God.

Just as she is, poor, wretched, blind,

He lays His heart open to her unhappy

heart. And, lo, the miracle is wrought upon the spot. She speeds away to the town, a messenger, a witness, an evangelist for Jesus.

The lesson, the type, the truth, is everlasting; it is up to this moment's date, and it is for us. What the soul needs, in precisely its low and broken estate, is nothing short of the *Summum Bonum*, which is Jesus Christ Himself. *A Te principium, Tibi desinet*; "From Thee begins, to Thee shall end the strain." We shall indeed find, to the limitless ages, that to Him will for ever gravitate and issue forth the highest and the utmost of our wonder and our worship, as we know the Father in Him, and Him in the Father, in the heavenly life. But oh, we must begin also with nothing less than Him at the very bottom of the process. Nothing can ever really save us but His personal gift of the eternal water, as the soul meets Him alone at the well, and even Apostles are not there to step between. Nothing can really show us either ourselves

or our redemption but His own utterance to us, by His Spirit to our spirit, "I that speak unto Thee am He."

Long ago the Moravian saints, in their Greenland Mission in 1740, had besieged for years the half-bestial tribes (so they seemed) with the teaching of elementary moral principles; and they were scoffed at for their pains by the savages, who replied that they knew all that already! At last they told them of the crucified Lord, and kept back nothing from them of His love and glory. Then did Kainaek, the medicine-man, the ringleader of all the pagan devilry, step forward, saying, "Say that yet again, for I would also fain be saved." And salvation came indeed to him and his fellows, and made a moral Eden in the wild.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.

His secondary blessings are precious indeed, with a glory shed from the hand

which gives them. The society of the Christian Church ; the hallowed and hallowing Sacraments, sealing all the promises of the blessed Book with the imperial seals of heaven—these things indeed are great. But their greatest function is to point onward, inward, upward, away even from themselves, to Him, the Personal Christ, the Lord, the Lamb, the King, the Priest, the everlasting Friend, who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, the same for ever, everywhere accessible, face to face, spirit to spirit, heart to heart. Sinful soul, thou mayest be a weariness to thyself, but thou art nevertheless dear to Him. Here, wherever thou art in need of Him, is the well, and He is seated by it, at leisure now, to-day, to bless thee with Himself. “I will give thee living water. I that speak unto thee am He.”

XXIX

A LIMB OF CHRIST.—i

“We are members of His body.”—Eph. v. 30.

For the word “members” here let us read “limbs.” This rendering will bring us a gain in life and force, while equally true to the original. “Member” is indeed only a longer word for “limb;” the two are synonymous, one of Latin origin, the other of English; a limb means a member, and a member means a limb. Only there is this practical difference, that we have come in the course of time to use “member” in a large, vague, general sense, in which we do not use “limb.” We speak of a “member” of Parliament, or of a committee, or of a club, but never of a “limb” of such companies of people. The word “limb” is much more restricted than is its parallel

word to denote connexions deep, organic, vital, between part and whole.

To describe the Christian, then, as a limb of the Lord Jesus Christ brings home to us in a special way the thought of a connexion with Him mysteriously close and strong. It reminds us that the bond between follower and Master is far more than one of spiritual regard, however reverent and tender; far different from one which depends even upon His being the sublime Object of our worship and of our gratitude, as our Divine Saviour from condemnation and our gracious Shepherd and Friend. It leads us deep into that wonderful secret of His love and power, our living union with Him. It points us to that gracious desire and purpose of His heart, that we, sinners of the dust, ruined and wrecked by the fall, "stained and dyed" by our own transgressions, should be not only mercifully rescued by His atoning work, but brought inconceivably close to Him in His holy and all-powerful life, and knit up with Him in it by living bonds, even

as our hands and fingers are part and parcel with us, always close to us, always instinctively protected by us, as dear parts of our very being.

Can we dwell too much upon this side of the truth that "we are limbs of His body"? As I grow older, it seems always more wonderful and beautiful to me that the Lord should love us in precisely this way, with this deep desire for living union with us. His love might be conceived of as great and beautiful, while yet far short of this. We might well think it a great thing to be told that He cared so much for us as to plan and provide for our happiness somewhat as a great philanthropist might provide for objects of his beneficent efforts, whom he had found in the slums, and transplanted to some wholesome, cheerful training school, and there equipped them for prosperous life, and so transformed them into other beings. On these his *protégés* from time to time he would look in, and visit them, and talk to them, and greatly encourage them, and

attach them to himself in personal affection. But the Lord's "philanthropy" is of an order infinitely above even that high level. He has, indeed, rescued us, and brought us under training for an eternal prosperity. But His heart is not satisfied with only that. He must have our very being joined to His. He must see us one with Him, and Himself with us. He must live, in His exalted life, so that He never lives apart from us. For He claims us to be "limbs of His body."

A few Sundays ago we briefly touched upon this aspect of truth, from another text; "joined unto the Lord, one spirit." But it will bear reconsideration, from many sides and from many texts. Deliberately I trace over again from this great word of the Apostle the lines of this inexhaustible treasure of truth, and press the happy, holy inferences upon my own and my reader's heart.

For the time, put other views of it away, and rest upon this, the insight which we

get through this window of heavenly light into "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." For me, a sinner, the Prince of Glory thus cares. To Him, in all His majesty, "at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him," I am dear to this degree and in this sense. "He *hath a desire* to the work of His hands," though that work is my poor, broken, sin-spoiled self. And the desire is so tender, and so strong, that it cannot stop short of the will that I shall be His "limb." Ah, He does not merely condescend to touch my personality with His holy finger! That would be wonderful, far more wonderful than even His willingness to touch of old the corroded body of the leper. But it is not enough for Him to stretch out His finger and touch my fallen being. He must transfigure my being into a oneness with His which makes it, as it were, His finger; a "limb of His body."

Therefore I may indeed be sure that He

greatly cares for me, if He thus so greatly provides for a ceaseless closeness to me and union with me. This is love indeed. Let us adore it by taking it at the word, and let us repose in the wonder of our being indeed, by His power and grace, "limbs of His body."

XXX

A LIMB OF CHRIST.—ii

“We are members of His body.”—Eph. v. 30.

LAST Sunday we took up this sentence and weighed some of its heavenly gold; remembering how the word “member,” used by our translators here, is only a longer equivalent for the word “limb.” We dwelt upon that word, with all its vivid, homely, powerful associations. We let it, above all, instil into our attentive and quiet hearts just that thought, that He who claims us to be His limbs must indeed greatly love us; for our limbs are our companions, everywhere and always; we and they are one thing, one interest, one life; their condition is of untold importance to us; their very appearance is of consequence. Union can no nearer go than it goes between limbs and man.

Are we, we His unworthy disciples, limbs indeed of our all-glorious Lord? Will the King take the peasant, nay, the mendicant, with damaged character, to be part and lot with Himself? Even so. "His desire is to the work of His hands," for whose redemption He has given Himself. He has come forth to be not only All-in-all to us, but One with us. He has "joined us unto Himself, one spirit," even as we remembered a while ago. "We are very members incorporate," "we are limbs of His body." "Behold, what manner of love!"

To-day let us take one step farther in thinking out this treasure of the truth of God. Let us consider the light which it sheds upon *the Lord's use* of His believing disciple.

Our bodily limbs, in the order of Nature, are dear to us. We take a keen instinctive interest in them; we often consciously, oftener unconsciously, take care of them, "nourishing and cherishing." We clothe

them, warm them, exercise them, heal them. Their well-being, even their well-looking, is a pleasure to us, at least so as to make their discomfort or defacement a pain.

But our thoughts of them do not terminate in this thought. The supreme interest to us of our lips, hands, feet, lies in our use of them. All day long we are, through them, carrying out our purposes, carrying on our intercourse, getting our duties done, enjoying our pleasures.

It is indeed all-important to my hand that, for its own life and health, it should be in fullest living union with me. It is important to my comfort that it should, in such union, be alive and healthy, giving me no trouble by ill conditions. But it is above all things important to me that I should have always the freest and most instant use of it. Its own well-being is much. But my use of it in that well-being is more ; it is the ultimate object of its existence as part of my system.

The moral is manifest. If we are indeed "limbs of His body," we are such, in the supreme and most noble respect of "membership," on purpose that our blessed Head may do with us, and through us, "the good pleasure of His will," everywhere and always; speaking His messages, accomplishing His works, travelling on His errands, by us His "limbs."

In the order of His actual plan and method, He has been pleased that it should be so. We may conceive of conditions under which His love might work by direct personal acts of volition only, dispensing with all intermediary channels. And never let us forget that He not only might but does so act in the inmost secrets of His intercourse with human souls. Ultimately, whatever messengers He uses, it is He who touches, He who reaches, the soul of man.

But granting all this, none the less does the Lord actually, in the vast field of intercourse in our human life, need and use us

as His limbs. All through the story of Redemption it is so. In the Old Testament days He walked by Joseph, as His feet, to prepare deliverance in Egypt, and by Moses, as His feet, to lead up His people in triumph out of it. By Nathan, as His lips, He wakened David from his death-sleep, and by Isaiah, as His lips, He promised Himself to be the Lamb of God. In New Testament times He "*began* to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1) in His own person; but these words plainly imply that He went on to do, and went on to teach, through Peter, and John, and Paul, and Luke, and Aquila.

Even so to this hour. You, Christian disciple, are the Lord's limb not only for the sake of your life but for the sake of His work. By you He has action to do in this world of sin, and grief, and need. Through you He has to speak to human ears, or to succour human lives; through you to seek the lost, to support the weak, to visit the forgotten, to lead the blind.

Wherefore, thou limb of Christ, who art

also His loving and believing brother,
“yield thyself (Rom. vi. 13) unto Him, as
one that is alive from the dead, and thy
limbs as implements of righteousness unto
God.”

XXXI

TWO ASPECTS OF BETHANY

“Lazarus, of Bethany.”—St John xi. 1.

“He led them out as far as to Bethany.”—St Luke xxiv. 50.

FAIR and dear to the Christian's heart is the name of Bethany. The associations of the life and love of Jesus have cast a beauty about the very sound : it breathes holiness and peace.

The village still exists. As the traveller leaves Jerusalem upon the Jericho road he arrives, after about half an hour's walk from the Damascus gate, which takes him into the Kedron valley, and then upward around the southern shoulder of Olivet, at the houses, grey, dilapidated, and not beautiful, of Bethany. Or he may take another line, and ascend Olivet to its summit, past the obtrusive structure of the huge Russian

convent at the top of the road, and then find his way over fence and field to the minor hills of the eastward side of the mountain, where it looks down upon Bethany.

There is a charm about the surroundings, certainly when seen in spring, as there always is a charm over the rural landscape of that land of many-hued soil and of thronging flowers. But the villages of Palestine are seldom if ever in themselves pleasant to the eye, and certainly Bethany is not; actual or impending decay seems written upon its dwellings. Yes, but it still is Bethany. The immortal memories dignify and beautify it all.

For, indeed, there is that wonderful peculiarity about the memories of Palestine, that they are memories and so much more. In Rome, and in Athens, our thoughts are with "the great departed" in "the silent land." At Jerusalem they are with Him who was dead, but behold He is alive for evermore; His very name is life and hope;

He is Lord of the future even more than of the past; He is, above all things, Lord of the present, "with us, all the days."

Pausing, and thinking of Him, at Bethany, we feel the power of two contrasted yet perfectly harmonious recollections of "this same Jesus."

(i.) The first is the recollection of His almost home-life there. The Gospels, alike St Luke (x. 38-42) and St John, tell us that Jesus was at home in Bethany. Just like the Gospel narratives, with their perfect blending of vivid picturing with grave reserve, they tell us little to gratify mere curiosity, but much to feed faith and love. At Bethany lived a family of three, two sisters and a brother, who drew to them the human love of the Lord, somewhat as St John drew it. Jesus Christ took a gentle and gracious pleasure in them. He *liked* (may we reverently use the word?) their company, their house, their welcome of Him as their Guest. Long before the end of His blessed course, so St Luke

seems to indicate, He had become the well-known visitor, whom Martha served ; to whom Mary listened wondering ; who called Lazarus back to life, and a few days later supped with him at the same table. Yes, He delighted on His part, as Man with humankind, in their characters and conversation. True, He was the King of glory. True also, He was the Man of Sorrows, passing on His mysterious way, spiritually *alone*, to the great Sacrifice. But He was also all the while *the Man*. "His delights were with the sons of men," and with the simple life of their human homes.

He could be just the Friend, the holy but none the less most pleasant Friend, perfectly used to every little household way in that dwelling at Bethany. It was almost His Nazareth again. He found two sisters and a brother there, not only three disciples. And in those last days of His, just at the close, in the very Passion Week, He *could bear* to be in quiet there, evening by evening—till He left the place on the

Thursday afternoon to return no more as of old.

(ii.) Then came the Cross, and the Grave, and the Rising again "in the power of indissoluble life" (Heb. vii. 16). How often in those Forty Days after resurrection He visited the beloved scene, we do not know. But at least once He was in the immediate neighbourhood of Bethany. The crowning day had come. The Son, having glorified the Father upon the earth, alike in death and resurrection, was to be "glorified by His side" above, "with the glory He had beside Him before the universe came to be" (John xvii. 5). Where shall He set His foot last, before He ascends to the Throne? "He led them out as far as to Bethany." Yes, once more the familiar village is to be visited. The scene of those home-hours shall be the point of departure for the eternal heavens. He takes the Eleven with Him; perhaps up that very path which I traversed, in 1897, to get, over Olivet, down towards Bethany, in order to see the spot which many

thoughtful hearts hold to be the true scene of the Ascension. The Apostles and their Lord gather upon that ridged protuberance of the huge hill; for Olivet is indeed a mighty mass. Below is the village. There is the house of Martha—roof, window, door. Near it yonder is the face of rock where can be seen the empty grave of Lazarus. He who stands in the midst of the group sees it all, and takes it all with Him, as He ascends, blessing His followers, to the sky.

So the Lover of Bethany shows Himself to us there as the Jesus Christ alike of Home and of Heaven. Do our hearts love both those scenes? We do well. In Him they are akin. And in Him they shall coalesce at length into one bliss for ever.

XXXII

“NO ROOT IN HIMSELF.”—i

“Yet hath he no root in himself.”—St Matt. xiii. 21.

WE find ourselves here in the midst of the parable of the Sower, and the phenomenon before us is that of “the stony ground.” Or rather, and far preferably, for we are thus at once closer to the Greek and truer to the pictorial purpose of the Saviour’s words, let us call it “the rocky ground.” So reads the Revised Version: “others fell upon the rocky places” (ver. 5); “he that was sown upon the rocky places” (ver. 20). The thought is not at all of a piece of ground encumbered with loose stones, needing to be picked out and thrown away. It is of a piece where under a thin layer of soil lies, broad and solid, a mass of rock,

needing, if that were possible, to be upheaved, or to be crushed, that the fine roots of the sown grain might strike freely down and find the living moisture below.

The Lord Himself expounds this detail, as He expounds the rest of His great parable. The case indicated is that of the man who hears the Gospel message, and "receives" it, takes it in some sense in; and does so "with joy." His emotions are stirred. He is charmed by the spiritual music, by the views and colours of the wonderful revelation of a mysterious happiness, exalted and exalting, here and hereafter. But unhappily the experience is not durable. The man comes to discover that the divine message involves pains as well as pleasures. He encounters "tribulation" in one form or another, in his Christian course. He is "persecuted" in one or another way, because he is an avowed disciple. And so "he is offended." He does not like it. His joy goes off. His reliance is shaken. His allegiance to his Lord is

too weak to bear a real strain. He has no “last ;” a little while, and he has forsaken Christ for the world, and turned his back upon the celestial light.

A vivid illustration of the case is familiar to us in the early pages of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*. There Pliable is seen setting out for heaven in company with Christian. They hasten together over the forlorn fields which border the City of Destruction ; Christian impeded by the burden on his back, Pliable stepping out more lightly. They converse of the prospect which, so they are assured, awaits them if they reach the far end of the narrow way ; the golden gate, the white robes, the angelic company, the face of the King. Then on a sudden, heedless of the ground, they both stumble into the Slough of Despond, and struggle miserably in the mire. Both at length climb out on to dry ground ; but on opposite sides. Christian lands on the further bank, and plods on towards the wicket-gate. Pliable scrambles out, wet and wretched,

with his back to heaven and his face to the City of Destruction, and leaves Christian, with an angry farewell, to "possess the brave country alone for him."

Pliable had "no root in himself." He "endured for a while." Christian had root. He was sad, and bewildered, and terribly defiled; but he went on.

The difference between the two wayfarers is plain to see, and it precisely points the moral of the parable of the Sower. Christian was convinced of sin. To the depths of his being he had come to know that sin was condemnable, and that he was himself indescribably "guilty before God." For him perseverance was a matter of life or death; he did not dare to return, for the thunder-cloud of judgment lay, for him, over the roofs and walls he had left. Pliable showed no sign, not the faintest, of real disturbance of the soul. He was pleasantly attracted by the prospect of a radiant future, and he liked, in respect of human sympathies, to be in company with one who

was setting out in great earnest towards it. But he had no root *in himself*. His own conscience had never been awakened. Christian's convictions attracted and moved him ; but they were not his own. He did not properly understand his own action. So when real troubles came across the track of it, he had no secret of resistance within him. He instinctively turned back—too probably for ever.

Spiritual experiences differ very widely indeed. Not all pilgrimages present for our study the order of events which Bunyan gives us in his Christian's case. Not all pilgrims have in the same proportion the ingredients of alarm and of gladness dropt into their cup of life. But we may safely say that seldom will a Christian man be found, whose heavenward course is notably a persistent one, who has not, deep in his soul's inner history, the ineffaceable record of a “time of finding,” a self-discovery never to be forgotten, when the Holy Spirit did His promised work, and “convinced of sin”

that human heart, that it might be *driven* to "believe on the Son of God," and live.

We will take the theme up again next Sunday.

XXXIII

“NO ROOT IN HIMSELF.”—ii

“Yet hath he no root in himself.”—St Matt. xiii. 21.

THE words “contrition,” “contrite,” are familiar in religious language. We well understand them to mean a state of moral regret, shame, and distress, produced by the thought of personal transgression. In Scripture we know the word “contrite” best, thank God, in a context full of the mercies of pardon, placed close beside the terrors of conviction; “a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps. li. 17).

Dr W. Kay, in his admirable commentary on the Psalms, a book of equal literary and spiritual value, renders the Hebrew word (*nidkeh*) not by the Latin “contrite,” but by the Saxon “crushed.” Let this remind us that exactly such is the meaning of contrite ;

it is just the Latin *contritus*, smoothed into an English form; and *contritus* means crushed, pulverized, broken into pieces.

Is not this a significant point, taken along with the picture of the "rocky" ground in the parable of Christ? What was the matter with that ground, from the sower's point of view? Precisely this, that immediately under the earth lay a hard floor of stone, cold and solid, upon which the feeble filaments of root would spread themselves in vain, only to die. It was a resisting mass which was not "contrite," and therefore impenetrable. Could some magic power have brought to it "contrition," could it have been *pulverized* where it lay beneath the upper earth, then through it the fibres could have found their way down, to reach at last the hidden moisture. Then the blade and ear above would have had the life of the deep ground in them, and have lasted, and have borne fruit "with patience." It was that uncontrite rock which frustrated all.

The moral is manifest. There is no bar to the living entrance of the message of Christ like that opposed by an unawakened conscience. For the Gospel, while it carries in it, to be developed in time, and in eternity, a “power of God” capable of raising and glorifying our whole being as no other force in heaven or on earth can do, immovably insists on treating man first as a sinner, defiled and guilty before God. And where man refuses to see himself as such, there the necessary correspondence is absent; the key lacks its lock; the root lacks its soil. The crucified Lord, the Lamb of the Sacrifice—where is His “beauty, that we should desire Him” *as such*, till in some true sort we see *ourselves*?

But let that most merciful pain be granted to us to feel, and then it is otherwise. Let the sinner in some real measure see (and “abhor”) himself, and let there then be presented to him the divine answer to his awful need—Christ for him, Christ in him—and then it is otherwise. Then the root

strikes down, and finds the eternal watersprings. The convert then discovers "*in himself*," though indeed not *of himself*, a root of certainty, of possession. He "knows whom he has believed," in a way which makes him able to last, because he dares not live apart from the secret of continuance. He may be attacked and fatigued by "tribulation," or even by "persecution;" and his frail humanity may feel them as keenly as any other man's. Yet how can he leave the Lord, whom he so immeasurably needs? He may be even more formidably beset by mental or moral doubts, seeming to touch the very base of things. Yet at his darkest hour he feels that there is such a correspondence between his central needs and the Christ of the Gospel that a deep internal evidence of Christianity lives in him, and moves about with him; "he hath the witness in himself" (1 John v. 10). It is no mere wish to believe, conjured into a phantom of certainty by his personal preferences. It lies deep in the moral nature of things. It

springs up through his personality, but from a depth beneath it. He knows that his conviction of sin is the voice of an infinite and everlasting Righteousness. And he knows that the Jesus Christ of the Cross and the Resurrection meets it as key meets lock—a purposed adaptation.

“Come, Holy Spirit, come;”

Convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesu's blood,
And to our wondering view reveal
The secret love of God.

“He will reprove—He will convince—the world of sin; because they believe not on Me” (John xvi. 8, 9). If I interpret that great word aright, it is just to our point to-day. The Lord Jesus finds a world that does not believe on Him, and He would fain have it believe, that it may be saved. Therefore He promises that the Comforter shall convince it of sin. For then, and only then, it will be shut up into faith in Jesus Christ as its life and hope. When the rock is contrite, the root will strike indeed.

XXXIV

THE CONVICTION OF SIN

“He will reprove (better, “convince”) the world of sin.”—
St John xvi. 8.

YET once more let us linger round that grave theme—conviction of sin. For two Sundays now we have been in face of it, pondering the parable of the rock and of the root. But the theme is not only permanently momentous. It is peculiarly a matter for our time, when a thousand influences, mental and moral, obscure and stifle in the common mind the sense of sin. Yet, as we have remembered before, some genuine sense of sin is vital to a full perception of not only the glory but the profound reason of the Gospel. For Jesus Christ came into the world not merely to cultivate and develop humanity, but “to save sinners,” to “save His people from their sins.”

As we saw last Sunday accordingly, there is a connexion, deep as spiritual facts can make it, between conviction of sin and that sort of faith in Jesus Christ which means reliance and surrender.

I do not intend to offer any deep discussion. Rather, our study to-day shall take a simple narrative form. Three incidents lie in my memory, for the truth of each of which I can vouch; one of them came almost within my personal observation.

The first is a narrative of warning. There is such a thing as an abortive, or fictitious, conviction, the cold result of a sheer dread of personal consequences, where the will all the while remains in itself centred upon evil. Not that all alarm in view of judgment means this sort of conviction. In our complex being there is a subtle possible connexion between the deeper sorts of fear and the genuine awaking of the conscience, so that the alarmed being not only dreads the sword of divine justice, but sees its worst terror to lie in the cutting the man off from the

holy and gracious Judge who made him. Such fears are true steps in the path to supreme blessing. But there is, alas! a baser sort of fear, where the criminal dreads the sword, but wishes as much as ever still to do the crime.

A friend told me the tale, a few years ago, as we paced together the deck of a steamship on the Mediterranean, and talked of the things unseen. The chaplain of a prison, intimate with the narrator, had to deal with a man condemned to death. He found the man anxious, as he well might be; nay, he seemed more than anxious; convicted, spiritually alarmed. The chaplain's instructions all bore upon the power of the Redeemer to save to the uttermost; and it seemed as if the message were received, and the man were a believer. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the chaplain had come to think that there was ground for appeal from the death-sentence; he placed the matter before the proper authorities; and with success. On his next visit, very

cautiously and by way of mere suggestions and surmises, he led the apparently resigned criminal towards the possibility of a commutation. What would he say, how would his repentance stand, if his life were granted him? The answer soon came. Instantly the prisoner divined the position; asked a few decisive questions; then *threw his Bible across the cell*, and, civilly thanking the chaplain for his attentions, told him that he had no further need of him, nor of his Book.

The next incident is so far within my own ken that I remember seeing, in my early childhood, the dear and beautiful subject of it, the aged widow of a farmer in my father's parish. My mother took me to visit Mrs E. one day in her farm-kitchen. It was, I think, in 1849. I still *see* the brightness, the sweet radiance, of that venerable face; it shone, as I now know, with Jesus Christ.

At the age of about eighty-one, after a life of blameless kindness, so that to say she had "never done harm to any one"

was from her no unmeaning utterance, she was, through the Holy Scriptures, convinced of sin. "I have lived eighty years in the world," was her cry, "and never done anything for God." Deep went the divine work in the still active nature, and long was the spiritual darkness. Then, "the word of the Cross" found its own way in her soul, and "believing, she rejoiced with joy unspeakable." Three or four years of life were yet given her. They were illuminated by faith, hope, and love in a wonderful degree. To every visitor she bore witness of her Lord. Nights, wakeful with pain, were spent in living over the beloved scenes of His earthly ministry; "I was at the well of Samaria last night;" "Ah, I was all last night upon Mount Calvary." In extreme suffering an opiate was offered, and she declined it; for "when I lose the pain I lose the thought of my Saviour too." At last she slept in the Lord, gently murmuring, almost singing, *Rock of Ages*, with her latest breath.

Wonderful is the phenomenon of the

conviction of the virtuous. But it is a phenomenon corresponding to the deepest facts of the soul. My last incident is another of the same type. Eighty years ago or so, one of the scholarly and estimable Valpys, of Reading, a blameless man of letters, was in his last days convinced of sin. He left a record of it, in four lines, which I have often read, printed on a card, on cottage walls :

In peace let me resign my breath
 And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.

XXXV

CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S

"There laid they Jesus."—St John xix. 42.

MUCH emphasis is laid in Scripture, and also in the great Creeds of the Church, upon the Burial of the Lord. Each Gospel of the Four gives us a careful account, down to the details, of His funeral. St Paul expressly refers to it among the other great facts of the crisis of Redemption, when he sums up his "Gospel" to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 4). The Apostles' Creed, and again the Nicene Creed (I use the common names of those two precious confessions of the Church's faith), both expressly recite that He was buried.

Undoubtedly the main reason of this lies in the fact that the Burial put an authoritative

seal, so to speak, upon the Death, and thus accentuated the supreme event of the Resurrection. The grave of Joseph did not indeed logically prove that the Lamb, on the "green hill" just above it, had veritably died; for the living have been buried by misadventure. But at least it threw the otherwise provable death into a solemn public prominence; it announced it as absolutely complete. So when, on the next day but one, then and there, that grave was found empty; when friends and adversaries alike, watching each other, looked in vain for the linen-wound Body; the Resurrection was fully evidenced to be no mere fancy, raised by an impression of uncertain causes on excitable emotions; nor again any mere putting forth, however wonderfully, of a spiritual but disembodied force. It was the triumph of the Lord's whole Being over death. His Body had been placed within the clasp of the grave. And His Body no more than His Soul was left within it.

196 CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S

But also in a way most precious, while subsidiary, the Burial of the Lord claims its place in the Bible and the Creeds as a fact of tenderest application to the suffering heart. Do you know what it is to stand, or sit, or kneel, heart-stricken, beside some mounded spot of green earth, unutterably dear? More mournful still, is it yours to be far away from it, perhaps separated from it by lands and seas, while you carry ever within you the consciousness that there it is—the grave, the silent holder of all that remains below of that beloved presence?

Ah, let us speak reverently of such griefs. But let us meet them always, persistently, with the Lord Jesus, and His burial. He died for us; there is our peace with God. He rose from death, and is alive for evermore; there is our eternal certainty that we live, and shall live, with Him, “in the power of an endless life.” But also, between the two, He was buried. So that dread thing, the grave, is itself transfigured. Not only will it be grand, one wonderful day, to have

done with it for ever, and to inhabit that great City which needs no cemetery, the heavenly Jerusalem ; but even now, while the grave lasts, it is altered, it is transfigured, because in it the silent Lord, in the reality of His human death, lay before us. I love to think of every Christian churchyard, every Christian grave, as linked spiritually to Joseph's garden ; a sort of extension of it, so that as it were the Lord's sepulchre—now open to the eternal day—is always one among the sepulchres of His people. I have tried to put it thus in simple verse :

There is one resting-place, and only one,
 For those who fall asleep in God's dear Son.
 To our weak thought indeed and sense's eye
 Far distant each from each may seem to lie ;
 By Thames, by Nile, or on the silent breast
 Of ancient China softly laid to rest.
 But faith and spirit see them, each and all,
 Carried to one green spot for burial,
 Where erst, unconscious of its glorious doom,
 Arimathean Joseph carved his tomb,
 And fenced the ground with marble in, and bade
 Cypress and olive weave a glimmering shade.
 There soon he bore his Saviour, newly slain,
 And there the sleeping Christ arose again,

198 CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S

And trode the paths in victory serene,
And turn'd to heaven the grief of Magdalene.
He now, from every land and every deep,
Brings His beloved there, and gives them sleep,
Still gather'd up in peace, while ages run;
A countless host, and yet in Him but one.
There, seal'd awhile, now open, the holy cell,
Where folded grave clothes lie, where angels dwell,
Assures the mourner of His life and power
Who for His saints prepares their rising-hour.
And He meantime, in glory and in grace,
Immortal Gardener of the flowery place,
Walks 'midst His people's tombs, and all the while
His eyes, so wet of old, foreseeing, smile.

XXXVI

STEADFAST AND ABOUNDING

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”—1 Cor. xv. 58.

THE context here is all important and of the noblest significance. That golden link-word, “wherefore,” takes us back to the whole contents of the chapter which closes here—that great chapter, that oracle of “everlasting comfort and good hope through grace,” which tells us of the destruction of death and of the prospect, sure and certain, of the final glory, the “perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul,” which awaits the children of God. Blessed be the Inspirer of 1 Cor. xv., and dear for ever to us be the Apostle through whom the Inspirer caused it to be written down. Many a reader of these

lines knows what a genuine voice from heaven that chapter can be as it is read in the quiet church where the mortal part of our beloved lies waiting to be laid beneath "the clods of the valley." Then, just then, comes the Church of Christ, and tells us, through the unerring Word, that not we shall die at last, but death, and that a glory beyond our holiest dream awaits our whole being at the coming of the King.

Well, just after that promise comes this precept. The gaze into eternity is not granted for the sake of reverie, but with a view to work. True to its genius, here as everywhere, the Gospel opens heaven to us precisely so as to glorify duty. Behold the coming bliss, O saved sinner, O serving disciple. Therefore, now, labour on. Get back to "the work of the Lord." Let the sight of "that world, and the resurrection of the dead," make "the next thing" sacred and beautiful to you. You have had a foresight of the harvest under the sky of the

eternal summer. Let its light fall bright and warm on the furrow, and the plough-share, and the team, as you work on under the November clouds of time.

It is just in the same spirit that, one line below, the Apostle writes, "now concerning the collection." The vision of glory is to affect the practical duty of subscriptions and donations. You are heirs of heaven. Therefore be cheerful, and also diligent and methodical, *givers* here on earth.

But we will not follow the resplendent context further. Enough now to take the text in itself. Here is a precept with two noble sides to it, bearing upon the spirit and quality of the believer's work for God. Look at it, and take the two sides of it in turn.

(i.) "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable." This is to be the first characteristic of our "labour in the Lord." It is to be persistent, and consistent. As little as possible is it to admit the element of fitful and uncertain fluctuations; energy to-day, languor

to-morrow ; sounding programmes, lean and half-hearted performance ; retreat in face of discouragements before they have been steadily met and firmly dealt with. If the expression may be allowed, the true Christian is to display a holy *obstinacy* in the work of the Lord. Having the goal of his service clear and bright in view he is to labour on towards it with a resolve unshaken. To him it is to be *the* work of life. He is to turn aside to no secondary ambitions and treat them as if first. "This one thing" he does, till his working day is done ; steadfast, unmoveable ; "the same yesterday, to-day, and" to-morrow—in this respect, that he lives as one who exists to do the will of God.

Even when strength fails him, in the sense of mortal strength, he will still go on. "We must go on," said John Newton, "even when we find we are going off ;" doing still, steadfastly, what we can. My beloved friend, now in the heavenly rest, the Rev. C. A. Fox, true saint, true

preacher, true worker, and wonderfully true sufferer, and also true poet of purest genius, wrote at the end of a short note to me (I found it lately after a long loss) these four deep lines :

Two glad services are ours ;
 Both the Master deigns to bless ;
 First we serve with all our powers,
 Then with all our feebleness.

(ii.) "Always abounding." Here is the other side. We have looked a little on the "unmoveable" aspect of the disciples' life. Now St Paul reminds us that by such "immobility" he means anything but a mechanical persistence, a labour which has become a mere habitual monotony to the worker, and perhaps, too, to those for whom he works. Alas, such "immobility" there sometimes is. The man, the good man, while he toils on, has somehow come to see little in his work but its exterior outline, and very faintly indeed to see his Lord. But that is not the ideal, nor need that, "in the Lord," be the actual. The

steadfast servant is so to keep in touch with the inexhaustible resources of his MASTER that over his persistency shall evermore be shed the living dew of a divine abundance. In Christ, his sympathies shall be for ever young. In Christ, his heart-resources shall be for ever fresh. No drought shall wither his "leaf," for his root is in the very river of life that issues from the throne.

Do we not know exactly such two-sided lives for God? And cannot He make even ours resemble them?

XXXVII

PERSONAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

“Knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”—2 Tim. iii. 14.

WE have St Paul here, writing to his dear “son” Timothy. It is a dying letter, a last solemn deposition made on the borderland of eternity. Every paragraph of this short Scripture carries with it the tender awe which attaches to last words; the writer is “now ready to be offered; the time of his departure is at hand.”

I know no book in the whole range of the Bible which seems, if I may put it so, more alive and pulsing with the deepest emotions of the human heart than this. Those who question the authenticity of the Epistle, as some have done, must assuredly have left this feature of it out of their

estimate of evidences. It is little in the manner of fabricators, such as we know them from other sources to have been in the early generations of Christianity, to personate profound emotion in a way which still, to the sympathetic reader, can literally make the eyes wet. No; the man who thus wrote of his own affections, his own tears, his dearest memories, his loneliness, his coming death, his faithful Lord, was no personator of some one else. He was wholly himself; therefore he was St Paul.

Among other of these heart-evidences of the truth and authenticity of the letter stands this reference to Timothy's early teachers; those "from whom he had learned" the Word of life, at whose knees, in his long-past childhood, he had come to know "the holy Writings," which now, in his maturer years, were to be his anchor while everything else drifted around him. We cannot help connecting this allusion with that other passage, earlier in the Epistle (i. 5), where the Apostle speaks of Lois,

Timothy's grandmother, and Eunice, his mother, and of "the unfeigned faith which dwelt in" them. It was their dear memories that the now grown-up and anxious pastor, amidst many perplexities, was to recall, and to be calmed, reassured, strengthened, by the recollection. He was to remember what they were, and so to be made quite sure again that he had "not followed cunningly devised fables," but stood with his feet upon the rock.

Let us ponder a little the thought here suggested, the help to faith drawn from the character, the personality, of the teacher.

To be sure, such evidential help is not meant to be taken wholly by itself, as a thing which can stand quite alone. The most beautiful life does not secure the being who lives it against mistakes, whether these be mistakes as to fact, or as to judgment upon facts. Some of the fairest Christian characters, for example, in past days, have been developed in men or

women who were infected by current superstition, people (in that respect) of their time; and their moral excellence does not guarantee to us the superstition. But that sort of guarantee is not what is in St Paul's mind here. He takes for granted the Gospel's *moral* grandeur. And he is prepared, if need be, to re-state the *historical* basis of its position, as he does in the opening verses of 1 Cor. xv. But then he appeals *besides* to a phenomenon which had brought that Gospel, in its direct and legitimate effects, close to the conscience as well as the heart of Timothy. He reminds him that his teachers, in those beloved old days, were no mere mechanical transmitters of a formula, but beings personally transformed by their faith, by the faith which had become their message. And he asks Timothy if that is not a mighty contribution to the certainty that the Gospel not only looks beautiful morally, and has vastly much to say for itself historically, but is also, what it ought to be if its

story is true, a spiritual power, all alive, formative, able to transfigure. Well, if it be so, let him welcome that thought deep into his heart, and feel in it the whole weight of the reality of the Gospel put into living and immediate contact with his soul.

Has my reader learnt Christ from a Lois, a Eunice? If so, let him "thank God and take courage," and use with a glad mind as well as heart the deep, the pregnant evidence enshrined in their memory, or, if that is granted to him still, in their living presence.

O my Mother, permitted to bless me here below till I stood "in the midway of this our mortal life," and now resting these six and twenty years with thy Lord in bliss, I remember thee, I embrace thy memory, and as I do so I go on again, amidst the infinite confusions of our time, the surer of that Gospel which did so wonderfully make thee what thou wast. *That* was no cunningly devised fable. The Lord Christ, whose atoning Cross was thy repose, whose

living Presence was thy strength, whose very Name was thy joy, in that life of thine so nobly natural, so sweetly supernatural, He is power and fact indeed. Thy son, by His mercy, will "continue in Him," remembering thee, and looking to rejoin thee in that place of light to whose reality thy being was a witness all along.

XXXVIII

ACCEPTED YET CHASTENED

“The Lord hath put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, . . . the child that is born unto thee shall surely die.”—
2 Sam. xii. 13, 14.

I do not intend to tell over again the infinitely sad story in which these words find place, or to moralize in detail upon it. This is assuredly one of the very darkest pages in that truth-telling Bible which shows us the sins as well as the virtues of the saints—this history of David’s great and complex sin. And the sequel is as full of sorrow as the initial incidents are full of sin ; as the narrative takes us on to Amnon, to Absalom, to Amasa, to Abiathar, to Joab, to Shimei, in steps stained with wrong and blood ; and David himself all the while, almost to his very end, is the mournfully

altered man ; under the shadow, under the rod.

A recent renewed study of those latter days of David's reign has left on my own soul an impression of peculiar sadness. There is nothing quite like it in the Bible. Look at this man who, from one point of view, was "after God's own heart," yet from another was so awful an example of the deceitfulness of sin, and so woefully chastened for it. There is no other Bible portrait with quite this tremendous *chiaroscuro*, this dread contrast of light and night.

But I take to-day this point in the story to read us a general lesson as to the spiritual life. Put aside the special features of the case ; think only of a servant of God, truly a servant of God, but who has sinned ; what will his Master do with him ?

The answer comes to us, surely, in the double burthen of Nathan's message. The prophet is sent to tell David two facts about his sin ; first, that it is "put away," as regards a sentence of death on David ;

then, that it will be chastened with rigorous faithfulness, for "the sword shall not depart from his house," and the child, the beloved, shall surely die.

Am I wrong in tracing here a lesson for all believers? In the light of Scripture at large, I think, the case of David is typical. Here first is a man who, by the plain testimony of the holy history, *was* a sincere servant of God, having really entered into the covenant of love and loyalty with Jehovah, "giving" really his "heart," and his life, in a true purpose, to His will. In New Testament language, he was a veritable "child of God," to be known by plain marks from "the children of the devil." He was so truly, in the Gospel phrase, "born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8) that men "heard the sound thereof." But then, this man was taken off his guard by temptation, and fell such a fall as indeed in itself merited a hundred times over the soul's final loss.

Yet, "thou shalt not die." No matter for us now what precisely Nathan understood

by those words ; it is plain that they indicate to us that David was held fast by the divine mercy, and was still owned by the Lord as His. Now this, I venture to affirm, is typical. In the whole range of Scripture I find no clear case of the final loss of the real servant of God. I read of no man, or woman, once unquestionably "right in the sight of God," and then unquestionably cut off from Him for ever. I somewhat deprecate the phrase, "the perseverance of the saints ;" I would rather say, "the perseverance of the Saviour." And I am amply aware how greatly, how grossly, the thing meant may be misrepresented, by advocates or by opponents. But I do think that the Bible on the whole encourages the faith that where once the grace of God has knit indeed the bond of actual part and lot in divine life and love, there the fidelity of the Shepherd's hand is never relaxed, to let the soul perish for ever.

There are Scriptures in which we find relations towards God, connexions with

Him, true and sacred in their order, which yet can be and are broken off. But I do not find in any Scripture an example of the ultimate killing of the true "life hid with Christ in God."

But then, "the sword shall not depart;" "the child shall die." Here, too, are typical words. Understand the "putting away of sin" to mean, as it surely does, the acceptance of the person as the Father's true child, the instatement into the real family and home of grace; and I venture to hold that in that sense the "putting away" is persistent, faithful to itself, faithful to the end; in that sense pardon is, for Christ's sake, perpetual. But the family, the home, has its discipline. The Father has His rod. The child has to meet his domestic sentence, his domestic punishment. He is a child still. He is not banished "to the tormentors;" he is not even turned into the street. But he has to taste the awful bitterness of a frown upon the brow of Love, and a scourge in its hand.

May we, in our manifold needs of spiritual experience, be mercifully kept sure of both truths; the acceptance in our all-sufficient Lord, the chastisement, sternly gracious, prepared for the offending child.

XXXIX

OUR ANGELIC FRIENDS

“ Fear not ye.”—St Matt. xxviii. 5.

THE doctrine of the Angels is no small treasure among the revelations of the Bible. Let the reader take the Book up with this one aim for once, to collect from it, literally from Genesis to Revelation, the materials given us for forming our belief about the angels, and he will find he has a large store of golden truth in his hands. He will probably put on one side those many passages of the early books of the Old Testament, where, we can hardly doubt it, an “ Angel of the Lord ” is spoken of who is angel and more than angel ; who speaks at once as Messenger and Master ; who must be the pre-incarnate Christ Himself.*

* See *e.g.* Gen. xii. 11, 12, as one great example out of

But when he has done this, and, if he keeps himself to the most unquestionable and explicit passages only, he will surely seem, like Jacob at Mahanaim, and like Elisha at Dothan, to see the air about him almost visibly alight and alive with these glorious beings, pure, strong, loving, wholly given up to God, not identical with man indeed, yet mysteriously near to him in thought, in sympathy, in action.

Never for a moment does the Bible authorize angel-worship. Even a personal appeal from man to angels to help him does not appear; a solemn note of caution, as if the Book would discourage any, even in themselves blameless, dealings with the Unseen, which would tend to deaden the fine touch of direct intercourse with God. But the Bible does put before us the being and presence of the holy angels as a fact unquestionable, in our Lord's opinion, and therefore in ours.

many. A good discussion of these passages will be found in the late Dr S. Leathes's *Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*.

One feature, and only one, in the Scriptural view of the angels, would I point out to my reader to-day. It is their "philanthropy," their love of us men, their friendship and fellowship with us mortal disciples of their Lord.

Here again let the reader take up his Bible. Everywhere this lovely phenomenon appears. The first mention of an angel at all, under that name, is where poor Hagar, flying from the unhappy tent, is accosted by an angel, cheered, guided, more than lifted up. Again, in that black scene at Sodom, how friend-like are the angels, ministers of doom as they are, in their dealings with unhappy Lot in his alarm. It is an angel who soothes and feeds Elijah, in gentlest sympathy with his human weakness. And when we come to the Gospels and the Acts, our "elder brethren of the sky" come out upon the scene in a frequency altogether new, and with a fellowship of spirit towards us most beautiful and precious. Let us deliberately read over the

“Words of the Angels,” from book to book of the New Testament; we shall find noble illustrations everywhere. The angel of Bethlehem—listen to him as he brings the “good tidings of great joy” to those poor shepherds on the hillside. He is no mere official of the court of Heaven, delivering a message in proper form. His very phrase shows that his own immortal heart is in the message; it is joy to him to communicate the greatest of all joys to mortal men in their low estate. Turn again to the angels who appear at the Resurrection, and these two among them who accost Magdalene in the Garden. Or listen to the “shining pair” who met the Apostles the moment after the Ascension. It is still the same. Their love, their all-generous *friendship*, goes with their words. The weeping woman, the group of frightened women, the eleven wonder-stricken men—all are important, all are dear, to these glorious *friends* from heaven. Every detail of the position is present to the angelic thought; everything

is known and noticed ; the fear, the perplexity, the promises, the mistakes, the hopes.

One beautiful utterance above others seems to rise unbidden to the angels' lips when they accost men or women of the family of God. "*Fear not ye ;*" how often they say it, at Bethlehem, and in the garden of Joseph ! Man instinctively *fears* the sudden manifestation of the Unseen ; he trembles with unutterable awe when he knows he is in the open presence of a personal spiritual Power. But these Powers of the upper world, "excelling in strength," "the heavenly *army*," as St Luke calls them in the Bethlehem history, are gentleness itself with a troubled human being who loves God. Whatever their unseen sphere contains, it contains nothing for such to fear. It is a scene of fraternal kindness for us mortals. It is thronged with "an innumerable company of angels ;" and they are all the kind friends of the believer in Jesus, their Lord and ours.

XL

REDEMPTION, ENDOWMENT, SERVICE

“He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness, and gave them the lands of the heathen, and they inherited the labour of the people ; that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws.”—Ps. cv. 43, 44, 45.

It is a remark of Dr Arnold's, I believe, that in the history of Israel we have, on a large scale, the history of the redeemed human soul. Assuredly it is true, for the believing reader of the Bible, that the history of the dealings of God with Israel gives us at every turn teachings and suggestions as to His will and way with the soul.

I do not hesitate to take the three verses at the head of this chapter in that light. They are the final cadence of that noble Psalm which casts into a form of choral beauty the

history of the Exodus, ushering Israel into Canaan in the full tide of heaven-given victory. They lend themselves (so I hope we shall find) with perfect fitness, under the illumination of other Scriptures, to set out the purposes of God in Christ towards the man whom He redeems and saves.

Consider each main point in turn.

(i.) Redemption and its joy. Behold the captives of Pharaoh led out into liberty by their Lord. It is His victory altogether :

Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea ;
Jehovah hath triumph'd ; His people are free.

It is a deliverance as magnificent as an almighty Friend can make it. The joy is as radiant as the wonder is divine. The dance and song on that memorable shore, where Israel comes up from the waters while Egypt lies whelmed beneath them, are as if we could watch and listen still.

The "bringing forth" of the soul into the liberty of Christ is only the Exodus repeated in a greater glory, worthy of a deeper and brighter jubilation. Whether

we ponder the Finished Work of the Lord Jesus in itself, or whether we think of the sinful man's acceptance of it, so that it enters, by faith, into the personal history of his soul, which then humbly claims, if I may dare to put it so, a Bethlehem, and a Calvary, and an Olivet of its own—it is an Exodus of more than mercy; it is a liberation into a “*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” Do we think the phrase too strong? If so, it is the fault of our faith, not of its object, not of its reason. Let us pray, with a resolute desire, for such a sight of our Egypt, our Exodus, our Canaan, as shall clear our eyes to see our joy more truly as it is.

(ii.) Endowment, and its fulness. “He gave them the lands of the heathen,” “the labours of the people.” Here is a feature of Israel's entrance upon Canaan often emphasized in history and psalm. They were not only emancipated; they were endowed. It was no wilderness of field or forest into which the liberated tribes were led. There,

ready for their fruition, lay the old wealth of a land which more and more, as modern exploration discloses to us what it was, appears to have been indeed a vast treasury of rich and cultivated abundance. Cities, roads, wells, vineyards, cornfields, all were there, ready and in order, transferred by the supreme Possessor from the Amorite to His own Israel.

Here also, imperfect indeed yet abundantly suggestive and impressive, is a parable for the soul. Pardoned, justified, liberated out of the slavery of the Fall into the Canaan of filial peace with God in Christ, we see here our call not to freedom only but to wealth. The Lord suffered for us not that we might have a mere wilderness liberty, but that we might be "in everything enriched in Him;" that "in Him," who is our true Promised Land, we might find ready for us, in perfect order for our use, in fairest beauty for our pleasure, "the unsearchable riches." In our holy inheritance we are to look around and say, with humble but undoubting

confidence, "*we have.*" We have the promises; we have the Spirit, the "Unction from the Holy One;" we have the Great High Priest; we "have access into the holiest." We have; and so we are called upon not to acquire but to employ. Arise, and let us live upon our wealth.

(iii.) Obedience to the Giver. "That they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." Again we read, in Israel, the intended story of the saved soul. By a profound law of spiritual life and order, "*we are saved to serve.*" To all eternity, the creature will never find its true ideal satisfied, and so its true bliss secured, except in the inner harmony of a loving and adoring loyalty to the Creator. So the heavenly resources of the life of faith, its holy wealth, will be never rightly spent, and therefore never entirely enjoyed, except in the line of His blessed statutes and His dear laws; in the surrender to Him, now and for ever, of the whole being which He has first redeemed and then so wonderfully enriched.

Come, let us reaffirm to ourselves, undoubtingly, our full redemption, and our vast endowment in the Lord. Then evermore let us "yield ourselves unto God," "as instruments of righteousness unto Him."

XLI

THE WORD HIDDEN IN THE HEART.—i

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”—Ps. cxix. 11.

FAR back in the year, within its first weeks, we turned to the hundred and nineteenth Psalm for our theme of thought. Under autumn skies we open it again. It is a Scripture always timely. For not only is it a part of that “Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. i. 23), and which alone opens to us the secret for ourselves of a part and lot in the ever-abiding life. Its own great topic, from the first to the last of its long and holy strain, is that same Word of God, and its revelation of divine love, and divine hope, and the divine will. That topic is never out of

date. Least of all is it out of date to-day, when the believing Church seems as if it were called to travel over Bunyan's "Enchanted Ground," upon paths thick with shadows of discouragement and decay, and where the air is drowsy with the malaria of materialistic thinking, "heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

Amidst the many urgent calls upon the Christian traveller at such a stage of the pilgrimage is a better and better acquaintance with the Holy Bible. Nothing can be a substitute for that, at a time of mingled mental and spiritual trial. On the other hand, nothing is more likely to be silently pushed aside at just such a time than this personal acquaintance with the Bible. The temptation to neglect it may come from many different quarters. One mind is diverted from assiduous Bible-study by a mere consciousness, however vague, that the peculiar character and authority of Scripture is at present widely doubted and freely denied. A subtle sympathy with the

current thought of our time lies latent in us, almost all; even where we least like the type of thought we feel it; it stirs to some extent within us; we sympathize with it, not in the sense of approbation but in that of sensibility to influence. Another mind, more active and resisting, is impelled by the unbelief around to a diligent study of "apologetics," and works hard over books which undertake to defend the Bible; a perfectly legitimate and often necessary task, but one which can never take the place of personal acquaintance with the Book.

There are times, and they come very often, when we need to go back to the Bible deliberately, and on purpose, and avowing it to ourselves, *in a spirit of old-fashioned expectation*. We need to open it with the "working hypothesis" (for the sake of argument I may use the phrase and not be misunderstood) that it is just the Book of God, given by Him as His Word to man. We need to invite it to be its

own best vindicator by proving its power, when so listened to, to bless the inmost heart, awing it, cheering it, uplifting it, humbling it, sanctifying it through and through with a fresh sense of the horror of sin and of the glory of the love and of the will of God.

“Do not read the Bible; learn it.” Such was the appeal with which a young Christian man, upon his dying bed, addressed his “young men friends.” He had come, happily for him, to a firm faith in the divine truth and authority of the Bible. He had carried that faith into “works,” by laboriously studying it, and coveting a close familiarity with its words in detail, learning large quantities of the Bible by heart, so as to have the Word constantly with him as the companion of his thoughts. And now, just about to step beyond books into eternity, he passed on his experience to those he was leaving, to the young minds of his own generation, as a watchword for their own future; “Learn the Bible.”

That is, quite obviously, what the Psalmist meant here when he wrote that he had "hidden the Word in his heart." He had stored it there, not for concealment, but for readiness for use. It was hidden, not as the talent was hidden in the napkin, but as the golden grain is hidden in the furrow. He got it "by heart," in the double sense of memory and of meditation. And indeed it fructified; it brought forth the fruit of holiness; he did "not sin against" his God.

A venerable godfather of mine, who died not long ago, full of faith and hope, within twenty months of a hundred years old, was a great lover and learner of the Bible. In his own best loved copy of the Book he had written—so his son told me when he was gone—the pregnant words: "This Book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this Book."

Yes, "this Book will keep us from sin." Not mechanically, not perfunctorily, but so that the man who converses spiritually

with the stored-up Word shall find that it tends divinely to assimilate his thinking to its own. “*Studia abeunt in mores*,” writes Erasmus; “study passes into character,” if the “study” is the work of heart and mind alike. The temptation to impurity, to untruth, to injustice, to worldliness, to irritability and causeless anger, to shame of the blessed Name, will fall dead, not living, upon the heart which it finds stored with that Word, and in sympathy with that Word, which at once unveils the face of God and expresses, as with “the pleasant voice of the Mighty One,” His “good, and perfect, and acceptable will.”

XLII

THE WORD HIDDEN IN THE HEART.—ii

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”—Ps. cxix. 11.

WE reflected last week upon the need of a close personal acquaintance with the Bible, not least in our own time, and upon the spiritual power of it. It is a truth worth reiterating, and infinitely well worth putting to the proof. The committal to memory of words, sacred or secular, is not so large a feature as it used to be in early education. There was perhaps a time when “repetition” in our great schools was practised to an extreme; but I do not think that time is now. There was perhaps a time when in Christian homes the learning by heart of chapters of Scripture, or even of whole

Epistles, was made too large a part of teaching; but that is by no means the present risk, if one may judge by the rarity of accurate quotation of the Bible, even in the pulpit. We need to return now from the other and much worse extreme, and to resolve afresh to "hide the Word in the heart," till the hiding-place is redolent of the fragrance of its treasures.

Happy the Christian to whom his Bible is so familiar that it goes not only with him, but within him, wherever he goes. It comes out from its recess in the memory, and talks to him in that dialect of grace and truth which is all its own. It converses with him on his solitary walk, or finds him out, quite as easily, in the deeper and dreary solitude of the world's crowd. It springs up close to the pulses of thought and will when the tempter whispers to him. It meets the foul suggestion, which can defile the whole imagination in a moment, with the reminder that "every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself,

even as He is pure." It calms the awful struggle of the spirit under some dead weight of loss or pain by the recollected assurance that "what I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter." It brings heavenly companionship all round the solitary pilgrim, till the famished eyes of the bereaved almost see the reunion that is coming; "we also that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord." It speaks to the believer in the worst straits of life in a voice clear and decided; "He hath said, I will never leave thee." As the man draws upon the wealth "hidden in his heart," he knows how to turn the wakeful hour at midnight, or that often more trying hour of the cold, white, silent, earliest morning, when sleep flies too soon, into a time of peace and reassurance and "that blessed hope." He then gathers and arranges the hidden possessions of his "heart." And not the isolated text only, but the wonderful symmetry and

correspondence of the vast structure of the Scripture message, bids him tranquilly recollect that his "confidence," even when it is embraced with tears, "hath great recompense of reward." And as he recollects, he realizes. As he muses, the fire burns. The sin of a misgiving of his God is exorcised by the heart-hidden Word.

Kindred to the experience of such an hour is that indefinable but profoundly real impression which is sometimes made upon the mind by what I may call the self-evidential power of even a single great typical utterance of that wonderful Book of books. Lately, in the ordinary course of daily devotional study of the New Testament, I arrived at that ever-marvellous passage, the eighth chapter of the Romans. How often had I read it before! Twice, I am almost ashamed to say, have I commented in print upon the Epistle throughout. Yet the chapter seemed to challenge an attention as particular and exploring as if I had never read it; almost as if it

were a new treasure unearthed from some convent library of the East. I reached that noble verse, the thirty-seventh, where the Apostle affirms, for himself and for his fellow-believers, that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." That sentence made on me an impression sudden and peculiar. It was not merely that it was eloquent to the highest degree. It was not merely that there was a tenderness as well as courage in it which was beyond analysis, yet none the less potent on the emotions. I did not contemplate it only as the expression of the heroic certainties of a great soul amidst great trials. I felt in it a solid angle of the vast rock of absolute reality, and my own faith, not by emotion but by the touch of truth, was strong again.

Truth, of the highest order, is apprehended not by the logical faculty only but by the whole spiritual being. To such apprehension, I humbly but boldly assert, that sentence, in that context, in that

writing, in that volume, presents itself as irrefragable truth. This more than victory, at once meek and sublime, over the whole range of human ills; this Personage, described without a name, this wonderful "He that loved us;" such things, so spoken of, with all that lies behind them in this Book so multifold yet one, cannot, in the nature of things, be waves on an ocean of illusion. They are of the structure of the Living Stone.

XLIII

BOLDNESS WITH GOD

“O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear?”—
Hab. i. 2.

THESE are strong words to be spoken by messenger to Sender, by servant to Master, by saint to God. They are part of a whole context of similar strong words. Habakkuk returns to his passionate outcry again and again. “How long shall I cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save? Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth.”

So strange is the phenomenon of such an address to God that it has presented to many pious readers an even distressing problem. Our great Elizabethan divine, Richard Hooker, has devoted two sermons

to the question, taking for his text those words, "Therefore the law is slacked." He thought it worth his labour elaborately to vindicate Habakkuk from the charge of having committed the great *sin of despair*.

Certainly the words, as we ponder them, are a shock to one side of Christian feeling. They do, in terms, read almost like a reproach upon the action of the Lord, or rather upon His inaction. In our own time, in a powerful book,* voice has been given to the thoughts of innumerable hearts upon the mysterious "*Silence of God*," His silence kept in face of humanity's sin and sorrow. Habakkuk shows us that the pain of that mystery is no modern thing. It was the silence of the Lord Jehovah which wrung his soul and made him open his prophecy with a cry like this, an almost discord amidst the song before the throne.

And Habakkuk is not alone in the Bible with this startling appeal, I had almost said this displeased protest. Asaph, in

* By Sir R. Anderson.

Psalm lxxiii., confesses to us how the silence of God had nearly made an infidel of him. Jeremiah (xii. 1) reasons with his heavenly Master about the inexplicable success of the wicked. Job's whole being is tossed in a long tempest over the same problem. Finally, we have the sixth chapter of the Revelation, where the veil is lifted from eternity, and we hear the voices of saints who have suffered and are at rest pleading with their Lord, asking how long He will be silent and delay: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou not avenge our blood?"

This last example must not be pressed too far, for the scene is largely, perhaps it is altogether, symbolical. But the other cases of expostulation (we can scarcely use another word) with a silent and apparently passive God are not figurative at all. They show us hearts like our own, burthened with mystery and speaking out their trouble, sometimes in terms almost or altogether impatient, into their Master's ear.

What shall we say? The first remark that arises, and the most obvious, and surely the most consoling and encouraging, is that indeed the God of the saints and prophets is a patient and generous God. He comes into our view here, in His own Word, in scenes and colloquies which He has Himself caused to be "written for our learning," as a Friend indeed, so friendly that He lets a Job, and an Asaph, and a Habakkuk pour out to Him all the embitterment of their souls, and yet only loves them, bears with them, listens to them, and waits to bless them. It is a glorious side-light which is thus thrown upon the Personal Character of our ever-blessed God. How can we describe it better than by that familiar word *generous*? What is it but a long-suffering sympathy? The infinitely Great is great enough to look out through the aching eyes of His sincere while unworthy servants, and to feel with the feelings of their bewildered hearts, and to bear with them, as man beareth with his fellow, when

he knows more than his fellow knows, but loves him well enough to understand and to respect his inability to see the whole meaning of a complex case, and to forecast its end. Such, sublimely greater in measure yet akin in its personal nature, is the generosity of God.

Then, and therefore, we have here, "written for our learning," a noble and moving encouragement, straight from the heart of this same Friend of friends, to speak to Him all that is in the burthened soul, just as it is. The New Testament repeatedly speaks of the "boldness," the "access with confidence," to which we are invited as we draw near the Holy One. In the Greek, in many of these places, a notable word is used by the Apostles: *parrhêsia*, that is to say, literally, the freedom which can "say anything," telling out the very thought, unrelieved, exactly as it is.

It was *parrhêsia* indeed when Habakkuk said, "Why do I pray to Thee, and it

seems to result in nothing?" His awful trial told hard on him. He felt as perhaps he should not have felt. But he was perfectly right in telling out his feelings, right *or wrong*, to his Lord. For he was free to "say anything" to Him. And we, we in the light of our revealed nearness to Him in Christ, we indeed are meant to "say anything" to Him, feeling the bewilderment, "but knowing Whom we have believed."

XLIV

A CHILD OF GOD

“The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”
—Rom. viii. 21 (literally rendered).

FROM a paragraph of supreme interest and significance comes this great promise. In the midst of what is, on the whole, the deepest and largest chapter of spiritual teaching and promise in the whole range of his writings, the Apostle here, on a sudden, lifts the veil from the future of universal creation, of what we commonly mean by Nature. About that creation he tells us two main truths; the first, that it is now in a state and stage of unrest and suffering; the second, that this stage is related to a condition into which the creation is yet to pass as travail is related to birth; a time is coming when the groan shall be stilled,

and the tossing quieted, and the constraint exchanged for liberty. It is now an iron age. But the age of gold is not, as to the pagan poets, lost in the vanished past. It lies in the yet curtained future. The year of bliss is in front. The creation is yet to be delivered into a liberty supreme and final, towards which already in mysterious yearnings it may be said to look and to move.

What that liberty shall be, in its details and also in its essence, "it doth not yet appear." But we may reverently conjecture that it shall be the experience of a state in which the Lord of finite Existence, whose will alone is its ultimate law, shall decree the removal out of His handiwork for ever of all friction and all decay, commanding Nature at last to enter, in a profound transfiguration, upon a state over which all that we mean by death and by dying shall no more have dominion. He who alone knows the inmost truth alike of mind, of force, of matter, as they rest for their being upon

Him, shall so readjust them to Himself and Himself to them that the civil wars of creation shall be for ever over, and finite being, in all its regions, shall be at peace within itself; in the kingdom of matter, as in that of spirit, "God shall be all in all."

O eternal Life,
After storm and strife,
When, when shall come Thy peaceful glories in?
All things yearn and sigh
Till that hour draws nigh,
Till God's great days of endless calm begin.

He who is "Head over all things to the Church" (Eph. i. 22) is also identically He who is the Cornerstone of Creation, "in Whom all things are held together" (Col. i. 17). He is the very Life of both worlds; and both worlds at last shall come out into that bright fulfilment of which His Headship is the pledge.

But our highest purpose to-day is not to discuss the future of the Universe. It is to direct one simple but illuminating thought upon "the glory of the children of God," and so upon the glory of being a child

of God indeed. In a wonderful way the Apostle makes the emancipation of Creation to hinge upon "the manifestation of the sons of God" (ver. 19); its "liberty" is bound up with "the glory of the children of God" (ver. 21). The supreme freedom for the weary Universe will not come *anyhow*; it will come when they, the children of its Maker, enter on the full and eternal fruition of their "adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body" (ver. 23) in the resurrection-bliss.

Think of the testimony of such a truth to the grandeur of the privilege of such a sonship, such a childhood! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!" (1 John iii. 1). By the vastness and splendour of the attendant "deliverance" of Nature, we may estimate in some small measure the transcendent wonder of that gift of grace, the new birth of sinful men into the very family of the Eternal. And shall we not covet a full and everlasting

part and lot in that "adoption," in that "regeneration"? And shall we not aim, in our study of its nature, its conditions, its evidences, as high as possible? If I read the Scriptures aright, I trace in them what I may call concentric circles of divine sonship. There is indicated, though dimly and with reserve, a divine sonship in man's nature and man's race as a whole, such that the creature "made in the image of God" is, as such, His "offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). There is further revealed a sonship of gracious connexion with Him in His redeeming plan, such that Israel of old was "His son" (Exod. iv. 22), and all now who are baptized into the name of Christ are "His sons." But, shining out with a solemn light as the central circle of all, and seen in passages of weight and number large indeed, appears a supreme sonship—the sonship of the human souls which actually believe, and love, and overcome the world, while "the world knows them not." Read for illustration and evidence

that one short but unfathomable book, the First Epistle of St John, and ask if the thought there is not altogether of this inmost and ultimate reality, the regenerate sonship of the living saints?

Well, the living saints, be their outward lot what it may be here below, have before them an amazing future. "It doth not yet appear what they shall be." But it doth appear that for the bursting of the bud of what they are into the flower of what they shall be, the whole Universe is waiting, yearning, groaning.

With them number'd may we be,
Here and in eternity.

XLV

MESSAGES FROM THE HIGH- PRIESTLY PRAYER

I. THE GENEROUS MASTER

“They have kept Thy word.”—St John xvii. 6.

WE owe to the Germans, I believe, that beautiful title for the seventeenth chapter of St John, “the High-Priestly Prayer.” Wherever it originated, it is a perfect designation of this sacred passage, “the Holy of Holies of the Bible,” as it has been also called. For He who spoke this exalted Intercession, with eyes uplifted to heaven, while His disciples listened around Him, was indeed the supreme “High Priest of our profession,” almost in the act of offering up Himself as the Propitiation for our sins. And in this utterance He was doing His High-priestly work as truly as in His

act of sacrifice. For the high-priests of Aaron's line, His types and forerunners, were at once sacrificers and intercessors. Every autumn, on the great Atonement Day, when under the open heaven they had done their altar-work outside the sanctuary, they entered, alone, into its curtained recesses, and appeared as intercessors in the Holiest, before the Ark, the Cherubim, and the Glory, pleading for Israel with the plea of the victim's blood.

Our blessed Aaron, the Lord Jesus, had not indeed as yet offered up Himself, actually, on His dread altar upon Golgotha. But that work was all complete in the eternal purpose before the world began to be. And so nearly was it over now in historical accomplishment, so close to Him now were the Garden and the Cross, that He speaks to His Father as of a deed already done ; "I have glorified Thee upon the earth ; *I have finished* the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

So His prayer is founded on His work.

It rests upon His offering. It is an intercession altogether sacerdotal, priestly, high-priestly, in its kind and its power. Surely it was spoken, just then and there, within the very sight and hearing of His followers, that they might the better realize what was to be the tone and burthen of that wonderful "advocacy" which He should carry on for them in the heaven of heavens itself, "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Let us draw near in humblest reverence, and in the very simplest faith, and listen for ourselves to the blessed Intercessor, as if we also stood beside Him in the upper room, or in the Temple court under the Paschal full moon, or just at the water's edge before He crossed the Kedron; wherever it was that He spoke to His Father for His Apostles and (ver. 20) for us.

As we listen, one element in the Prayer shall to-day leave itself particularly upon our hearts. I mean its element of a tender and wonderful generosity, if the word may

be used without presumption. In the course of praying for the disciples, the Lord incidentally speaks about them, by way of description and character. They are "the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world;" the men who are "Thine," and therefore "Mine," in a profound connexion. "They have kept Thy word." "They have known surely that I came out from Thee; they have believed that Thou didst send Me." "I am glorified in them." "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world."

Such is the great Intercessor's view of His followers, and His description of them, in that deep colloquy with the eternal Father's heart. How grand and noble a picture it is! What a group of heroic saints must this be, gathered around their Leader, filled with His Spirit, entering into His purposes, open-eyed to His glory, responsive to His will, true to all the finest touches of His truth and love!

As a fact, how was it? Reverent be all

our thoughts of the holy "Apostles of the Lamb." Who are we that we should discuss them lightly, or name without a certain solemn shrinking any even the slightest weakness in men for ever now bound up with their Lord's glory? But it is no irreverence to take and remember their own description of themselves. It is they who with noblest fidelity to truth tell us how dim their insight was, all along, up to and beyond that hour, into the splendour of their Redeemer's being, into the holy awfulness of His atoning work, into the coming triumph of His resurrection. It is they who depict to us Peter, and Thomas, and James, and John, and Philip, in their mistakes of word and conduct; their own protests against His coming sufferings; their flight from beside Him in the Garden; the terrible oaths of denial of Him in the house of Caiaphas; the total failure to expect His victory over the grave.

Such were the men who heard themselves thus spoken of by the Son to the Father

when, in their presence, yet as if alone, He lifted up His eyes and prayed.

How shall we explain the beautiful but surprising paradox? I do not think we are to say that the great Advocate, in that act of prayer, viewed them as involved in His merits, clothed in His righteousness, hidden, and so in some sort transfigured, in Himself. No doubt, for glorious purposes, they were, and we ("who believe through their word") are, in mysterious reality, involved, and clothed, and hidden, and transfigured so. But that is in respect of our need of finding, as guilty beings, a sinless welcome to the home of the present love and peace of a reconciled God. It is not in respect of our personal characters, and actual thoughts, and actual exercises of will and affection. And it is of these that Jesus is speaking here.

Two suggestions in elucidation may be made, both drawn from the heart of Christ, both running up in reality into one.

The first is that He, absolutely clear-

258 THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER

sighted, saw into those troubled and imperfect hearts to a depth where, by His grace, latent but genuine, lay the seeds, so to speak, of that Pentecostal life which was so soon to be fully theirs, and in which so largely, so luminously, in a true transfiguration, He *was* to be "glorified in them." He saw the seed, and in the seed the flower, as if it bloomed before His eyes.

But then, secondly, He who thus saw, saw with eyes not only absolutely clear but also generous, with a love before which the objects of its regard were beautified and glorified by its own light. It belongs to the supreme personal character of the Son of God to delight to welcome and to praise, to seize the least occasion for it, and to hold up the thing so honoured in a radiancy of kindness which makes it already, to His heart, what He would have it be.

For such a Master who, that gets one glimpse of Him, would not live and die?

XLVI

MESSAGES FROM THE HIGH- PRIESTLY PRAYER

II. THE THEISM OF THE LORD JESUS

“Father, the hour is come. . . . Holy Father. . . . O righteous Father.”—St John xvii. 1, 11, 25.

WE listened last week to our great High Priest, our Intercessor and Advocate, as He prayed for His Apostles, and for us “who have believed through their word.” We observed then that gracious aspect of His prayer, the generous love with which the Master thought and spoke of His servants, looking at their imperfect graces in the light of His own sublimely tender affection, till those graces shone transfigured by that radiancy into something nearer His own bright image.

To-day let us approach and listen again.

And our attention now shall be given to an altogether different element of the High-Priestly Prayer. We will follow it, so far as we may, not downward towards its human objects, but upwards towards the Hearer of it above, the FATHER thus invoked by the SON. So listening, so pondering, we shall learn a little of the Theism of Jesus Christ.

“I believe in God.” It is the very first article of the Christian creed. It is the first article of creeds not Christian, the Jewish, the Mahometan. It is a confession to which witness is borne, deep and manifold, from every various quarter, first and most weightily by the conscious self of man, then by the whole universe mental and material around it. Conscience and science alike, heard in quiet, affirm the existence, the will, the presence, at once above and within the world, of a personal Majesty, ultimate and supreme.

Yet few are the thoughtful hearts that do not sometimes feel the mystery of their confession more intensely than its certainty.

Reason itself sometimes, and imagination often, falter, or seem to falter, questioning in the silence and the dark whether indeed the Personal can be also the Infinite; whether a supreme Free Will can indeed be trusted to be at work under the seemingly absolute uniformity of the world-process; whether the course of experience, alike in the universe or in the individual, accords with the assertion that over everything, always, everywhere, a holy and kind purpose presides. There are hours when even the established disciple passes under the cold shadow of such questions. Perhaps it is in illness, when the body weighs down the spirit. Perhaps there has just happened one of those great public calamities which make even the modern world shrink and pause; a ghastly wreck at sea, or on the railway, or, on the larger scale of things, an eruption of Krakatoa, or of Mont Pelée. (It is said that a perceptible wave of atheist feeling in Europe followed upon the great earthquake at Lisbon, a century and a half ago.)

Or the wheels of ruin come over our own hearts ; our home is shattered by bereavement ; we have often spoken sympathy to others, perhaps a little too easily and glibly, "but now it is come upon *thee*, and thou faintest ; it toucheth *thee*, and thou art troubled " (Job iv. 5) ; and the stricken soul asks, is there indeed a Father who "pitieth His children" ? Why does He let things happen, then, which no earthly father would permit, if he could help it, to fall upon his child ? Why does He let them happen, *and keep silence all the while ?* Such thoughts, if not brought to a halt somehow, may go on till they slide downwards to that dread abyss of Jean Paul Richter's "Vision," where the soul seemed to see, at the centre of the universe, *a socket without an eye*.

Many are the reflections, simple and profound, by which the "mind" whose "loins are girded" (1 Pet. i. 13) *can* bring such thoughts to a halt on the dreadful incline, there to wait for light and power from on high. But I know none of them at once

more simple and more deep than that which "remembers Jesus Christ," and listens again to His Theism. Behold this Personage. To His moral glory, unique and supreme, universal conscience witnesses, far beyond the pale of His Church. His transcendence over the law of death is assured by His resurrection from the grave, without which the world-wide worship of His name at this day cannot be explained. His contact with an eternal plan is evidenced by His appearance then and there in the world, at the end and issue of a vast avenue of prophecy and preparation. Contemplate His person, His character, His work, His infinite influence. Is He not to be trusted as one who stood in true relations with the unseen and everlasting?

With such thoughts, look upon Him and listen to Him again as He "lifts up His eyes to heaven," and speaks into the other world. What does He see there? Whom does He address? To Jesus Christ, behind all veils, above all mysteries, "eternity" is

“inhabited” by One who lives, who loves, who hearkens, who is holy, who is righteous, who is on the throne of things, who is His own sacred FATHER. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee. Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. This is life eternal, to know Thee, and Me whom Thou hast sent. I have finished Thy work. Now come I to Thee.”

Come, let us look up through our Master's eyes. Let us ascend upon His words. So we shall go at length where He is gone. And we shall rest meantime, with thoughts like these, in the unalterable certainty that GOD IS LOVE.

XLVII

PERSONAL CONFIDENCE AND ITS POWER

“I know whom I have believed.”—2 Tim. i. 12.

HERE we have two personalities in immediate contact, “nothing between.” On the one side is the man believing, this human Ego who asserts this individual knowledge about the Object of an individual reliance. On the other side is that glorious Object, also personal; not “it” but “He,” not “which” but “Who.” Unnamed, He is however, in the context, unmistakable. He is the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal, whom to trust, in spirit and in truth, is “pardon, and holiness, and heaven.”

The man believing, the person who relies, and who affirms his personal knowledge

and personal faith, is Paul. His course is very nearly at an end, after all its eventful experiences. "He is ready to be offered;" he is writing his wistful, wonderful farewell to the living man he loves best, with the practically certain prospect, within a few months at latest, of a martyr's death. He is left almost entirely alone as to old companionships. He is shunned by ordinary society, as he never was before, for it is a reign of terror now, and he is its leading designated victim. He is called to the singular sorrow of going down to death amidst the apparent ruin of his whole life's work; for truly to every eye but that of the firmest faith the enterprise of Christianity must have seemed to be on the verge of extinction at the date of the death of St Paul.

Yet his tone is calm, and his hope is unshaken. Not that he does not feel, and has no tears. As we reflected in an earlier chapter, no writing in the New Testament is so full of deep and strong human emotion

as this Second Epistle to Timothy. The critics who would make it out that the "Pastoral Epistles" are a fabrication, untruly signed with the Pauline name, can never duly have weighed this great element of the evidence in their favour, this accent of the suffering heart in the Second Epistle, an accent which religious fabricators of that age were quite incapable of personating. No, this is the writing of a real man in real pain, tenderly conscious of the "tears" (i. 4) of his friend, dwelling with yearning love on the names and memories of other days (i. 5), and alluding, though only alluding, to heart-breaking sorrows and solitudes of his own (ii. 9, iv. 10, 11, 16). The tone, the dialect, is pathetically authentic; the inventor's miserable art could not approach it.

But then, the assurance and repose of this man's spirit, beneath his sorrows, is unbroken. He has no misgivings about his cause; "the foundation of God standeth sure" (ii. 19). And as to himself, far from

a sense of collapse and failure, he has an even exulting consciousness of a task accomplished, a victory won, and "a crown of righteousness" ready for him in the hand of a triumphant King (iv. 7, 9); for him, and for an uncounted multitude besides, who share with him the brightest of all hopes; "not for me only, but for all them also that love His appearing."

What is the secret? Stated as briefly as possible, and in its essence only, it is faith. "He believes, therefore he thus speaks." "This is the victory that overcomes, even his faith." And what is faith? In the sense at once of common language and of divine truth, of the market-place and of the Bible, faith is trust, it is personal reliance.

This man, awaiting the death-warrant and the executioner, is sure of ultimate success and of eternal life not because he is a philosopher, nor even because he is an inspired prophet of the future, but because he personally relies upon Jesus Christ, who has promised him peace and glory, and who

is such that His cause cannot possibly do other than prevail. It matters little whether Paul can so foresee as to be able to say, however vaguely, by what methods the triumph will be won. It is enough that he knows his "glorious Leader;" to know Him is to be sure of himself, for he is joined to Him, and it is to be sure of the outcome of the long campaign, for the Commander is almighty and infallible. The man who belongs to Jesus Christ and who relies on Him may well be at peace. He is lifted above perplexity and disappointment in the arms, and at the heart, of his redeeming King.

Such is always the victory of the saints, over sorrow, over mystery, over everything that threatens. It was Peter's victory when confronted (John vi. 68) with the unfathomable mysteries of Christ's teaching: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was Martha's victory

when wounded to the heart (John xi. 27) by not only her brother's death but the seeming indifference of her Master about it; "Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ."

It is a truth of deepest reason as well as of purest revelation, that "we are saved by faith." For the meaning of those words in Holy Scripture is that we are saved by *a trusted Christ*. Here is no mere formula of dogmatic thought. It is the watchword of the living soul which has seen in any measure its "own exceeding need," and has been shut up to that "confidence of self despair" which finds in Christ *alone* the infinitely adequate basis of its reliance.

"I know whom I have trusted; I am persuaded that He is able."

XLVIII

CHRIST OUR ALL

“Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 Cor. i. 30.

IN the margin of the Revised Version a rendering of St Paul's Greek here is given, which interprets it, as I believe, better than any other rendering. Quoting the passage consecutively, to include the margin, it runs thus: “Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” The Apostle's meaning is thus represented to be that the Lord is given to us, by His Father's supreme bounty, to be our “wisdom,” our secret and solution for all our perplexities and needs; and that this “wisdom,” when applied in detail, takes a threefold aspect, in relation to a

threefold primary necessity of the soul of man, man the sinner and the mortal. As regards the problem of guilt and condemnation, Christ Jesus is our "wisdom" in the form of "*righteousness*." As regards the problem of the power and tyranny of besetting sin within us, He is our "wisdom" in the form of "*sanctification*." And as to the last great problem, death and the grave, "this same Jesus" is our "wisdom" in the form of "*redemption*," "to wit (Rom. viii. 23), the redemption of our body."

Even if we retain the "Authorized" rendering, or that given in the text of the Revision, the explanation of the passage will work out much as I have here given it, if we illustrate the great words "righteousness" and "redemption" by St Paul's own use of them elsewhere, and remember that the "*and*" which connects "wisdom" with them is a very elastic link-word, and readily lends itself to the meaning "*even*," where the context favours. But I repeat my belief that the margin of the Revision is

the truest counterpart of the actual wording of the apostolic Greek; and it most certainly gives us this for its message, that Christ Jesus, as our wisdom, is such in this *threefold* aspect of grace and blessing.

Placing the verse before us for our study, let us first very briefly recite afresh to our hearts what these three sides of mercy are.

(i.) "Righteousness." For commentary, we turn to the Roman Epistle, written very nearly at the same time. In it we open that golden chapter, the third, at the 25th and 26th verses. Take them with their context, and carry on your study over the fourth and fifth chapters, and can you doubt what is meant there by "righteousness," "the righteousness of God"? It is nothing less than His own secret of peace, the acceptance of sinful man, in Christ, as if he were not sinful; His "justification" of "the ungodly" (iv. 5); His welcome of the offender as satisfactory to the very law he has broken—not for no reason, but

because the blessed Christ of God, one with the Lawgiver, has become the propitiation for our sins. If words have meaning, that is the message there. And it is the message also here, by the same great messenger. Christ Jesus is our "wisdom," "our thought profound," in face of the problem of our acceptance. For He is "the Lord our Righteousness."

(ii.) "Sanctification." That is to say, an inward hallowing, a willing, self-surrendering, dedication to the holy Lord. Truly the problem here involved is sacred and deep. It is well to be pardoned. It is wonderful to be accepted, justified; which is more than to be pardoned; for pardon need say no more than, "You may go," while acceptance can say no less than, "You may come, even to the heart and home of God." But it is impossible for the living conscience to be ultimately content even with that amazing blessing *isolated from its intended sequel*, the purity of the heart of the accepted man. And what shall inwardly cleanse that

polluted recess? Can toils and tears of ours do it? Can laceration and mortification of the body do it? Not at the centre, not in the depth. There is only one effectual "wisdom" *there*. It is Christ Jesus, our "sanctification," the personal secret of our inward separation from sin to God. "I have learnt the secret at last," said a naturally passionate man, asked how he had come to be all that was kind and patient. "I used to try to keep my own temper; I now trust it to my Lord to keep for me." He had found Christ Jesus his "wisdom," in the aspect of sanctifying presence, peace, and power.

(iii.) "Redemption." This, as I have indicated, is to be taken here, following thus *last* upon those other words, as the final redemption, "the redemption of our body," foretold of old by the prophet (Hos. xiii. 14): "I will ransom them from the hand of the grave; I will redeem them from death." How shall it be? Nothing that we can watch seems more final than death,

more hopeless than the grave. Our "wisdom" breaks down there, in dust and ashes. But not so "the wisdom of God," which is His Son, Christ Jesus. In Him we behold death actually conquered, and the human body actually transfigured into immortality. He has given practical proof that "He can subdue all things to Himself." And He has given His word that they who are joined to Him shall share *the whole* of His victory, in body, soul and spirit.

In closing, let us stand back from this wonderful verse and look at it once more, not in its threefoldness but in its unity. Three sublime blessings have passed before us, covering (when we think them out) our whole need as sinners who must die. But they all run up into one thing. Nay, into one Person. They are not abstract propositions about Christ; they are Christ Himself. No distant effects, ejected afar from Him the Cause, are here in view. HE, living, loving, suffering, triumphing, indwelling—HE IS ALL.

Therefore the “all” on our side is to accept Him, in all the fulness of what He is, with the open hand of the very simplest personal reliance, taking HIM at His word.

XLIX

“THIS SAME JESUS IN LIKE MANNER”

“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—Acts i. 11.

As the year of our common calendar runs out to its close, the ancient seasons of the Christian year begin their course. Advent, the Season of the Coming, is upon us with December. The sunset of time is annually preluded by the commemoration of the rising of the eternal day.

We cannot claim any conscious original purpose for the arrangement. It has come to pass we hardly know how. But it is a recurring fact, however caused, full of solemn and of heart-uplifting significance.

The Coming of Our Lord! The words, to be sure, have a double reference, and may

lead us, according to connexion, to ponder either His "coming in great humility" as the Infant of Bethlehem, or His promised glorious Return. To-day however we will think only of this latter. Later, with the Christmas glory before our eyes, we will speak of the former.

There is no need to recall at any length the occasion of the words at the head of this chapter. It was the moment after the Ascension. The "eleven disciples" were following their Lord upward with longing eyes, from that eastward spur of Olivet of which we thought in an earlier chapter, when on a sudden beside them stood two "men," in bright, luminous clothing, and spoke the words before us.

Stier, at the close of his *Words of the Lord Jesus*, makes some beautiful comments on this utterance of the angels, dwelling on the fraternal sympathy it displays, and even on the *local* sympathy, if we may phrase it so, which comes out in the address, "Ye men of *Galilee*." But we will not linger

over this ; it is just one of those many examples of angelic brotherhood with man which we dealt with some weeks ago. All that we will particularly remember now is that this most definite of predictions about the glorious Return is angelic ; it is a report upon the purposes of Heaven brought to us from within the veil by the heavenly ones themselves.

What does it say to us ?

First and most conspicuously, perhaps with more perfect distinctness than any other prediction of the Second Coming, it assures us of its absolute "literality." The language of that Oriental book, the Bible, is rich in the figurative element. Take for example Ps. xviii., where David sums up the divine deliverances he had experienced, and observe how he throws his thought into the shapes of the earthquake, the thunder-storm, and a manifestation of Jehovah as miraculous as that at Sinai. Yet in all David's recorded history nothing of that kind, we may say emphatically nothing,

appears. The Lord's "advent" for David's deliverance was in reality a succession of providential interpositions in which miracle was at most a very subordinate element; and the Psalm sums it all up in a magnificent figure. We are tempted to ask, May not the final fulfilment of the purpose of God take the same form? May not the "coming of the Son of Man" prove to be, in reality, no more than a grand series of events, providential to be sure, but not "miraculous;"

No living Lord, whom man once saw,
Nought but some vast event,
Some gradual, self-working law
In large embodiment?

Not so, say the angels of the Ascension. In one supreme respect at least, "that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour," will be full of a sublime "literalism." For not only shall the central Figure be supremely personal, "this same Jesus." He shall "so come, *in like manner as*" He was seen going into heaven.

Yes, in the unknown future to which we move incessantly forward, this thing is known, this point is fixed. There shall be an hour, as distinct and single as the hour of His retreat from earth, when to earth He shall return. From the deep Unseen *He* shall, "in like manner," come again within the range of human senses, of human vision. Be the attendant mysteries what they may, this shall be true; "every eye shall see *HIM*."

Can anything be more penetrating, more fit to touch the conscience, than that simple prospect, when we reflect that no veil, no film of interposition, shall in that day float between our very eyes and the personal presence of "Jesus Christ the Righteous"? that we shall give account then not through any intermediary courts of investigation but face to face with Personal, Eternal, Incarnate, Truth and Holiness? Think it out sometimes. Realize, if it is possible, what it would be to be called, to-morrow, to some specified spot upon this earth, to

have an interview of account with Jesus Christ, immediate and direct.

On the other hand, for the servant who is at once “found in Him” and true to Him, what can measure the bliss of that prospect of sight? A beloved friend of mine, years ago, in a solemn dream, saw the Return. Three glorious figures were beheld, through her chamber window, advancing in the sky. One she knew not; one was the archangel; the Other was—the Lord. And at *that* sight all the unknown springs of love and joy within the soul rose in blissful power *to fill* the being; and she woke.

Thou art coming, Thou art coming;

We shall meet Thee on the way :

We shall see Thee, we shall know Thee,

We shall bless Thee, we shall show Thee

All our hearts could never say :

What an anthem that will be,

Music exquisitely sweet,

Pouring out our love to Thee

At Thine own all-glorious feet !

L

THE LAST COMMAND

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—Acts i. 8.

THE Revised Version gives us one change of rendering here which is to be observed. Instead of “witnesses unto Me,” it reads, “My witnesses;” and this is a closer rendering of the Greek of St Luke, or at least a rendering more likely to be quite close. Yet the difference, while we notice it, is not such as to negative, but rather to include, the meaning of the Authorized Version. The thought which it accentuates is that the “witnesses” *belong to* Christ as their Master, and exist, as witnesses, for His ends. The other rendering rather puts to the front the thought that Christ is to be

the matter of their witness ; they are to be “witnesses *unto Him.*” But in either view *they are to be witnesses.* They are to be, not inquirers, thinkers, philosophers ; they are not to set out upon a mission of mental or moral research and discovery ; they are not even to be, primarily, prophets of righteousness and judgment. They are to bear witness, to offer a personal testimony to the world ; to inform it of a revealed certainty, of something which they know and which it needs. And the whole record of the Gospels, and of the Acts as the sequel to that record, tells us beyond mistake what that revealed certainty is ; it is nothing less and nothing other than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The two Versions together thus contribute to assure us this, about the Apostles first, but then also, to the end, about the believing Church which was to carry on their work ; they were, and we are, to be witnesses to the world of Jesus Christ, as those who belong to Him, purchased by His

blood, and appropriated by His grace, on purpose that we may be such.

This is the very last command of the Lord. He stands, as He utters it, with His feet upon the steps of the heavenly throne. As all through His earthly ministry, so now, almost from the place of bliss itself, "He commends Himself." He sends His followers out into the world on purpose, as their work of works, to bear a testimony. And that testimony is to be borne, first and last, to Himself. Man's immeasurable need is to be met by telling man, as only those who personally know can tell, about the Son of God and Man, the one Name of Life, Christ Jesus the Lord.

As we approach the year's close, and while we think (as we thought last Sunday) upon the Second Coming, it will be well once more definitely, solemnly, and with great simplicity, to recollect this final edict and charge of Him whom we love, and whom we look forward to see face to face, "this same Jesus "

The world has many religions, some of them older than Christianity, as Brahmanism and Buddhism, some later, as Mahometanism; not to speak of Judaism (whose relation to Christianity sets it apart), and the countless minor phases of belief. Through the disturbing, often wofully distorting, medium of the non-Christian creeds, some great original truths unquestionably shine. At the very least and lowest, the persuasion of the existence of unseen personal power is maintained by them. And behind them all the human conscience, the candle of the Lord, however dim, however its lantern blots its light, says something to man everywhere of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come. The Christian missionary, wise and sympathetic, never willingly forgets this in dealing with pagan or with Moslem. Nay, he finds in this recollection his best foothold for advance in the name of Christ upon the non-Christian soul. But all the more, not the less, he knows that what that soul

unspeakably needs, in order that it may find out aright both itself and its God, is precisely what not the most exalted non-Christian creed can give it, namely, Jesus Christ. So he addresses himself with his whole being, (keeping that being, by a watchful faith, filled with Jesus Christ,) to be His witness, a witness unto Him.

“ Our sacred books in the Far East have many noble moral precepts. But your sacred Book alone shows how such things may be done.” So said a young Oriental to me, a nominal Buddhist, a Japanese student at Cambridge. It was twenty-one years ago, in Moody’s inquiry-room. The youth was just then trembling on the verge of the discovery of his Lord, of whom that great “ witness ” had spoken as only they speak who have heard Him speak to them. Within a few weeks from that day I baptized Nathaniel Kenzo, a convinced and rejoicing believer. He had found the heavenly secret which comes to us not by investigation from below but by revelation from above, from the very

heart of God. "Eye had not seen, nor ear heard, but God revealed it to him by His Spirit."

"Occupy till I come." He who gave us that last command, to witness unto Him, expects the obedience of His Church, and is coming, when "the times and seasons in the Father's power" have run out, to inquire into the results. He knows HIMSELF to be the world's supreme and vital need, and He has equipped us to convey Him to the world.

As a fact, one half of the human race have not yet heard His sacred name. And eighteen ages and two-thirds are gone. His Return may well be drawing very near. Shall we, shall believing Christendom, awake at length, at length, to the conviction that we exist as His witnesses, to witness unto Him?

LI

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE LORD

“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.”—Gal. iv. 4 (R.V.).

“THE time draws near the Birth of Christ.” The old year is sighing to its end, under the shadows of December. But the sigh is lost, for the believing Christian, in the song of Bethlehem. Time says, “we die, we perish, we all perish.” But the Lord of Eternity comes into time, and takes up the existence of the children of time into His own, and says, “Behold, I make all things new; because I live, ye shall live also.”

“Thou didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb.” So says that old and glorious song of our Faith, *Te Deum laudamus*, sung now for some fifteen centuries upon this poor earth, just as we sing it now. Sacred, unfathomable, is the mystery of that Virgin

Birth. We can scarcely wonder that it has been doubted, discredited, even denied, within the Church itself; pronounced even by devout minds to be not altogether an article of faith; to be separable from the truth of the Incarnation, the *Menschwerdung*, God's becoming also Man; so that we may hold fast this latter and yet think the story of Matt. i. and Luke i. and ii. to be a poem, a myth, a dream. For my part, with profound conviction, I dare to say that so it cannot be. Not to dwell on the fulness of St Luke's story, and its primeval date (for such is its date to all but an artificial critique), and the countless fine touches of internal evidence to its solid structure of sober fact,* consider a point of thought about it which lies near to the essence of our belief. If the Son of Mary were indeed the Son of Joseph too, He would assuredly have come into human being, as we come,

* Elaborately and skilfully brought out in a great book of sixty years ago, W. H. Mill's *Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*.

a human person, separate and individual. He would not have come as God made Man, one blessed Person for ever, so that it was the identically same Christ who, "for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven," lived, suffered, rose again, ascended, and shall return. He would have come as *a man*, who might indeed have been then "possessed" by the divine Son, but could never, to all eternity, be personally identical with Him. He would be such that we could never say, looking up to the Throne, and to Him who sits there by the Father's side, as He sate there before the world was (John xvii. 5), "*Thou* wast made flesh for us; *Thou* didst die for us; *Thou* art able to be touched with our infirmities, for *Thou* wast tempted like as we are, yet without sin." All that wealth of "everlasting comfort and good hope" which comes with the thought that "the Son of God loved me and gave HIMSELF for me" (Gal. iii. 20) would disappear, as to any power of ours to grasp it as a fact, if

we must think of our dear Lord (were it possible) as two persons, one “possessed” by the other; *a man* taken up and used by the eternal Son of God; and not, as our sure faith affirms Him to be, our One Lord, One Life, One everlasting Hope and Friend.

Let us hold fast the Birth of Jesus, of the holy Virgin, by the Holy Ghost. It is no mere abstract tenet of correct belief. It is an element, infinitely sacred and tender, of the very life of our spiritual peace and strength.

That granted, that secured, then let us give ourselves in thankful simplicity of thought to the wonder, joy, and gratitude which only the full truth of the Annunciation and the Nativity can ensure.

Dear are the names of classic story
 That thro' the bosom strike a living thrill;
 Olympian snows reflect unfading glory
 And Heliconian springs run music still;
 And Troy and Athens yet retain
 Their spell for pleasure and for pain;
 But there is that which passes them—
 'Tis Thy blest history, Bethlehem!

“His Son, born of a woman.” Supreme wonder, tenderest consolation, spring of a

hope which cannot possibly make ashamed! Here is solved, in a fact, in a Person, for ever, that old riddle of the mind of man, how the Infinite and the Finite can really, absolutely, meet. Behold the CAUSE of all things, "the Mighty God," without whom were not made "Arcturus and his sons, and the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the bands of Orion," aye, and the angelic orders, the principalities and powers of heaven. Behold HIM, wrapt in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger! He has entered human life *by our door*; for He is a Mother's own Son. He is one with us indeed, in the profound bond of a common nature. And He, no other, even He, is one with the eternal Father too.

Blessed Birthday, dear to eternity and to time! Let us hasten with our Birthday Gift and lay it at His feet—ourselves, our hearts, our all!

From the Father's glory,
 From the Virgin's womb,
 Infant and Eternal,
 Saviour, Thou art come.

Older than Creation,
Cause of things that are;
Younger than the Mother-Maid,
Tender Morning Star.

Goal and rest for ever
Of the life-worn mind;
To the little children
Infinitely kind.

* * I am indebted for some valuable suggestions, used in this chapter, to an essay in the *Churchman*, June, 1903, by the Rev. J. Foxley.

LII

HIS FACE: THEIR FOREHEADS

"They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads."—Rev. xxii. 4.

WE have come to the last Sunday of the year. Does it not seem as if it was but a week or two ago that we thought over, on its first Sunday, the promise of the Presence "all the days"? To-day, as in the Psalmist's time, "we pass our years as a tale that is told," and seem to hear already the hush that will succeed the tale, as the night falls upon the listening circle by the fire, and they separate for sleep.

But the Word of God, which so fully recognizes the deep pathos of Time, is rich in antidotes to it. One such antidote we sought to use last Sunday, the supreme remedy, the Coming into time of the

eternal Son of God, made one with man. Another, virtually related to this, yet also to be contemplated apart, is before us here in this great promise of the eternal future. True always to itself, the Bible, "the Book of Hope," closes its oracles with the revelation of a beginning which has no end. It lifts us beyond "the shadow of our night" to the prospect of a life out of which the pathos of time is exorcised for ever. Resting that prospect not upon emotions, however tender, but upon the Person and Word of the risen and glorified Redeemer, who is the Morning Star (xxii. 16) of the final day, it bids us be sure that there shall come in at length for the life-worn soul of believing man a state as full as divine love can make it of sorrowless as well as sinless perfectness, in which "He that sitteth on the throne" will "make all things *new*."

No tremulous joy, no tear-besprinkled happiness, bearing a relic of sorrow in its heart, is promised us in the Scripture doctrine of the future. Ours is a "hope full,"

to its brim, "of immortality." We look for a world where, as the Rabbis have somewhere wonderfully said, the blessed grow not older but younger as they live on in heaven.

Out of this last outburst of the Oracle of Hope let us take this short sentence, and think upon its double glory.

(i.) "They shall see His face." Here is the supreme promise of the Gospel. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). "Now we see by a mirror, in a riddle; but then, face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12, literally). "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). Throughout the long Christian ages, this hope of "the beatific Vision," of that Sight of the Lord which makes absolutely blessed, has shone before the eyes of the Church on her pilgrimage, as the ultimate rest and glory. So it must be. Heaven is to be the scene of an endless life. That prospect, apart from the sight of God, would be even terrible; it would

more than realize the sorrowful Tithonus-legend of the Greeks, the woe of the being who, asking for immortality, forgot to ask also for immortal youth. Nothing but the Vision can keep the finite creature new and young for ever. But that can; each for himself, all for one another, and for the Lord, the blessed shall be for ever crowned with an unfading, yea, a blossoming life, seeing Him.

“His face.” And whose, exactly, is that fair and vivifying Countenance? It is not the presence of a “God in the abstract,” a benignant but nameless Deity. Look at the verse preceding, and know that it is the face of GOD IN CHRIST. What else is meant when the seer of the Revelation, using to the last the peculiar imagery of his great prophecy, looking into the Holy City and discerning there its everlasting centre of order and of love, writes that “the throne of God *and of the Lamb* shall be in it, and His (not Their but His) servants shall serve Him”? For ever they

shall, on the mount of the Vision, "worship the Son in the Father, and love the Father in the Son."

(ii.) "His name shall be in their foreheads." His Name, the transcript of His Character, the celestial family-likeness of His children, shall shine unmistakable upon those white tablets—the foreheads of the glorified. "They shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is." Observe that significant touch in the picture, "*in their foreheads.*" No vague and (so to speak) inarticulate radiance circles the throne of God and the Lamb. It is a multitude which cannot be numbered. But it is no mere mass, no mere aggregated unit. It is a host of faces. Look, the very foreheads are to be seen; each forehead there, as it is here, the seat and the expression of personal character, of individual thought, and will, and affection; no two precisely alike there, any more than here, while all are suffused with the inner oneness of the family of God. Each happy personality, while one with Him, and in

Him one with all, is *itself* for all eternity, sustained by Him unwearied in its blissful identity, and so contributing *itself*, that individual radiating point of life and love, to the joy of all.

“ ’Tis heaven at last.” So sings Horatius Bonar, in a poem full of his own characteristic mingled joy and pathos, imagining what it will be to look round at length, and lo, beyond all the travelling, it is veritably the eternal Home!

So shall it be for us, “when rolling years have ceased to move,” through the great mercy of our God in Christ. As I think that thought, I seem to see it embodied in a certain inscription, on a marble slab, outside the southern wall of a village church, the church of Hilterfingen, which looks from its gentle eminence across the waters of the Lake of Thun. The stone bears the name of an English woman, long departed. It seems, by what its English legend implies, to tell us that she had in her time tasted deep of the cup of loneliness and sorrow.

But now, so its words of triumphant faith, grandly adapted from Isaiah (lx. 20), assure us, all this is over, and the Vision has satisfied the solitary pilgrim's eyes: **THE LORD IS MY EVERLASTING LIGHT, AND THE DAYS OF MY MOURNING ARE ENDED.**

THE END

By GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

The Historical Geography of the Holy Land

Seventh Edition. With Scripture Index and Six Colored
Maps, specially prepared. 8vo, cloth, 730 pages, \$4.50

. . . No one work has ever before embodied all this variety of material to illustrate the whole subject. His geographical statements are pen-pictures. We are made to see the scene. No important problem is untouched. Without question it will take its place at once as a standard work, indispensable to the thoroughgoing student of the Bible. — *Sunday-School Times*.

. . . An exhaustive collection of material lay outside the plan of the author. His intention is rather to show how the history of the land is conditioned by its physical structure. It is thus the idea of Karl Ritter which rules the treatment and presentation. Very comprehensive sections are concerned, not with the history, but with the nature of the land. . . . The author pays special attention to the military operations. One could sometimes imagine that an officer is writing, who, above all, regards the land from the point of view of the military strategist. In this connection especially the history of Israel in its chief crises in Old Testament times receives striking illumination. Large passages are frequently quoted from the Old Testament in order to explain them by the exhibition of their geographical background. In addition the author has a special gift of vivid representation. He makes the history transact itself before the eye of the reader in dramatic form. One sees, everywhere, that the landscapes which he describes stand before his own eyes. Thus the book is an extremely valuable means of aid to the understanding of the history, especially of the Old Testament. — Prof. SCHÜRER, of Kiel, in the *Theol. Literatur-Zeitung*.

The book is too rich to summarize. . . . The language is particularly well chosen. Few pages are without some telling phrase happily constructed to attract attention and hold the memory, and we often feel that the wealth of imagery would be excessive for prose were it not that it is chosen with such appropriateness and scientific truth. . . . To the reader much of the pleasure of perusing the volume comes from its luxurious typography, and the exquisite series of orographical maps prepared by Mr. Bartholomew from the work of the Survey. These maps alone are more suggestive and enlightening than many treatises, and they are destined, we trust, to enliven many a sermon, and turn the monotony of the records of Israelitish wars into a thrilling romance. — *Speaker*.

A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON

3 and 5 W. 18th Street, New York

By GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

In Two Volumes. Crown 8vo, cloth, \$1.50 each.

VOLUME I. CHAPTERS I.—XXXIX.

VOLUME II. CHAPTERS XL.—LXVI.

This is a noble volume of a noble series. Isaiah will ever be the cream of the Old Testament evangelistic prophecy, and as the ages go on will supply seed-thought of the Holy Ghost which grow into flowers and fruits, vines and trees, of divine truth for the refreshment and nourishment of the intellect, heart, character, and life. *How can any pastor or instructor of the public, young or old, afford to be without such aids?* — *Baltimore Methodist*.

Prof. George Adam Smith has such a mastery of the scholarship of his subject that it would be a sheer impertinence for most scholars, even though tolerable Hebraists, to criticise his translations; and certainly it is not the intention of the present reviewer to attempt anything of the kind, to do which he is absolutely incompetent. All we desire is to let English readers know how very lucid, impressive — and, indeed, how vivid — a study of Isaiah is within their reach; the fault of the book, if it has a fault, being rather that it finds too many points of connection between Isaiah and our modern world, than that it finds too few. In other words, no one can say that the book is not full of life. — *Spectator*.

It would be difficult to say how highly we appreciate the work, or how useful we believe it will be. — *Church Bells*.

He writes with great rhetorical power, and brings out into vivid reality the historical position of his author. — *Saturday Review*.

Mr. Smith gives us models of expositions; expositions for cultivated congregations, no doubt, but still expositions which may have been largely preached in church. They are full of matter, and show careful scholarship throughout. We can think of no commentary on Isaiah from which the preacher will obtain scholarly and trustworthy suggestions for his sermons so rapidly and so pleasantly as from this. — *Record*.

The Book of the Twelve Prophets COMMONLY CALLED THE MINOR

In Two Volumes. Crown 8vo, cloth, \$1.50 each.

VOL. I.—AMOS, HOSEA AND MICAH. Seventh Edition.

VOL. II.—ZEPHANIAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, OBADIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH I.—VIII., "MALACHI," JOEL, "ZECHARIAH" IX.—XIV., AND JONAH. Fourth Edition.

In Dr. Smith's volumes we have much more than a popular exposition of the minor Prophets. We have that which will satisfy the scholar and the student quite as much as the person who reads for pleasure and for edification. . . . If the minor Prophets do not become popular reading it is not because anything more can be done to make them attractive. Dr. Smith's volumes present this part of Scripture in what is at once the most attractive and the most profitable form. — DR. MARCUS DODS, in the *British Weekly*.

Few interpreters of the Old Testament to-day rank higher than George Adam Smith. He is at home in criticism, in geographical and archæological questions, and in philology. . . . Hardly any commentator of the present day is more successful than he in putting the student at once into the heart of an Old Testament problem. — *S. S. Times*.

The above four volumes are contained in "The Expositor's Bible," and are subject to special subscription rates in connection with that series. Descriptive circular on application.

A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON

3 and 5 W. 18th Street, New York

DR. WM. M. TAYLOR'S LATEST WORK.

THE PARABLES OF OUR SAVIOUR.

EXPOUNDED AND ILLUSTRATED. By WM. M. TAYLOR, D.D., LL.D.
Uniform with same author's "*Limitations of Life*," and "*Contrary Winds*," and other Sermons. Crown 8vo, cloth. \$1.75. net.

"To Archbishop Trench, who more than any other English writer has brought patristic lore to bear upon the illustration of the parables, every later author must express his peculiar obligations; but the recent works of Prof. Bruce and Goebel have broken new ground in this department, and my aim has been to turn their fruitful suggestions to good homiletical account. The little vols. of Dr. Dod's—only the first of which was in my hands when these discourses were prepared—are full of richest nuggets; and the Expositions of William Arnot are characterized by the masculine sense, rich Christian experience, and striking illustrations for which he was so remarkable. But the present work, while indebted in different respects to all these authors, will be found to be in others independent of them all."—FROM AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

N. Y. Observer says: "Dr. Taylor shows in this work his large acquaintance with this portion of religious literature. A better book for the study, the Sunday school, and the Christian has not been issued this season."

Methodist Recorder: "Dr. Taylor's style is clear and strong, and he brings out with great distinctness the leading thoughts contained in each parable. It will be read with pleasure and profit by thoughtful Christians. The volume is one of more than ordinary richness."

Cincinnati Herald and Presbyterian: "They are rich in truth, simple and plain in style, and give evidence of ripe scholarship. They are suitable for all classes of readers, and cannot be read without profit."

Lutheran Quarterly: "They are clear and direct in style, abound in apt illustrations, are textually faithful, and breathe a devout and scholarly spirit."

Christian World: "One cannot help but be struck with the fact, as he reads these discourses, that the author has brought to bear on their exposition an acute and yet wonderfully practical mind."

Christian Leader: "Recent research has opened up great wealth of fresh lore bearing upon the suggestions of the parables, and these Dr. Taylor has not only mastered, but assimilated."

Congregationalist: "The whole series is characterized in a remarkable degree by strong common sense and a shrewd insight into human nature and needs, as well as by the loyal purpose to lead men and women to God."

NEW WORK BY REV. W. M. TAYLOR, D.D., LL.D.

JOHN KNOX.

With a fine Steel Portrait. Engraved by HOLL, from a Painting in the possession of Lord Somerville. 12mo, cloth. \$1.25. net.

This work gives a vivid, comprehensive and accurate account of the life and work of the great Scottish Reformer. It includes a careful and well ordered summary of the career of Knox in England, as that has been brought to light by the recent investigations of Lorimer and others. Particular attention has been given to the course of events in Scotland during the last thirteen years of the Reformer's life, and his interviews with QUEEN MARY, as well as his work in the reconstruction of the Scottish Church, are described with fullness of detail and independence of judgment. The story is admirably told, the interest being maintained from first to last, so that the book will be at once delightful to the young and instructive to those of maturer years.

Copies sent by mail, post paid, on receipt of price.

A REMARKABLE BOOK BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

12th Thousand. 12mo Cloth, \$1.50.

IMAGO CHRISTI: The Example of Jesus Christ.

By Rev. JAMES STALKER, D.D.,

*Author of "The Life of Jesus Christ," "The Life of St. Paul,"
"The Preacher and His Models," etc.*

"Each of the sixteen chapters are brief; all are packed with matter; the book is one of the most suggestive and striking of the many books inspired by the unique character of Christ."—*New York Evangelist*.

"The life of Jesus has been studied through the centuries and will be studied through all time. It is one of the most valuable books of its class we have ever seen."—*Pittsburg Christian Advocate*.

"The style is clear and forcible. The comprehensiveness and definiteness of the treatise are excellent. The work is one of the best for helping earnest believers in Christ to see how to realize the divine ideal in their daily career."—*New York Observer*.

Chicago *Advance* says: "This book is sure to have a wide circulation. It is a thoroughly readable book. This topical method of treating the subject has an advantage which will be warmly appreciated. It will be proved a specially useful book in connection with the study of the Life of Christ and in the Sunday-school Lessons for the year."

Presbyterian Review, January, 1890: "Dr. Stalker has brought fresh treasures out of a field that has often been explored, but not in his method. The volume is interesting as well as instructive. The author thinks clearly and writes lucidly. The book is a worthy companion to the impassioned devotion of Thomas à Kempis."

Rev. Dr. McCOSH says: "It is a most precious book, full of practical wisdom and tenderness, fitted to quicken and nourish the spiritual life in the soul."

ENGLISH NOTICES.

"It is the finest piece of devotional literature the Church has received for many a year. The freshness of thought, lucidity of style, reverence of spirit, and direct practical tone will make it prized as a book for quiet hours."—*Christian Leader*.

"The study of the methods and matter of Christ's teaching, which he has continued from his *Life of Christ*, is even fresher and better than any thing in that brilliant little book."—*Scots Observer*.

"His previous books on the *Life of Christ* and the *Life of St. Paul* have had a great vogue here and abroad. But this is a greater book than either, and fitted to exercise a still wider influence. We need not dwell on the many-sided culture manifested every-where, or the author's remarkable literary gifts, shown especially in pregnant aphorisms and vivid descriptions. His thoughts are always arranged and expressed with exquisite order and lucidity, and he throws an occasional plummet marvelously far into the depths of his subject. But the power and beauty and life of the work mainly come from this, that the author has been in living contact with Christ and man."—*British Weekly*.

"It is not easy to speak of Dr. Stalker's book without exaggeration, and we are not surprised that some of our contemporaries have pronounced it superior to his *Life of Christ*. A more suggestive book for the Christian teacher we have not read for years. It abounds in new and true ideas, always clearly, often strikingly expressed."—*Methodist Recorder*.

"This work supplies a real desideratum in theological literature. Dividing the circle of human life into segments, each of which represents an extensive sphere of experience and duty, the author follows our Lord through them one after another, and shows us how he conducted himself in each. The pages are beacon lights, guiding us in our life's journey; and no one can peruse them without being profoundly impressed with the wealth of the gospels in counsels of perfection as to human conduct."—*Christian*.

Copies sent by mail, post-paid, or receipt of price.

Added 1904

5-2

71-

3-

Lit

4600Q

M861

Moule, H.C.G.

From Sunday to Sunday.

Lit

4600Q

M861

